

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

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

## ***NEWSLETTER***



Keith Warman's maps are hung out to dry on returning home after the Hadrian Hvdred in May – see inside for stories and photos of Kent LDWA members' exploits on this year's 100-miler, generally reckoned to be one of the toughest ever.

**Number 109**



**August 2019**

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



*These photos were taken on  
Peter Jull's series of linear Timeball & Telegraph Trail walks  
he put on between February and April – report inside.*



## KENT LDWA SOCIAL WALKS AUGUST-DECEMBER

Please check Kent group website for any late changes to the details below

### **Sun Aug 4 Cream Tea Walk**

20ml. 09.00 Boughton Malherbe Church. Park in field opposite. (GR TQ882495). **C:** Neal O'Rourke

### **Sun Aug 11 White Cliffs Challenge Marshals' Walk**

32ml. 08.30 From St Margaret's Village c.p. (GR TR359447). For further details contact Graham. **C:** Graham Smith

### **Sun Aug 18 Alliteration E - Easts Farleigh and Sutton**

20ml. 09:05 East Farleigh railway station. (GR TQ734536). Pub lunch. **C:** Peter Jull

### **Fri Aug 23 Fish and Chip Walk**

10.25ml. 17.00 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 24 White Cliffs Challenge**

See Events Diary.

### **Mon Aug 26 Three Pits Walk (part of White Cliffs Walking Festival)**

c18ml. 09.30 Meet at Northbourne Village Hall. (GR TR334523). Maps: Exp 138, 150. A walk visiting the former Kent mines of Betteshanger, Tilmanstone and Snowdown. Pub lunch stop. **C:** Graham Smith

### **Sun Sep 8 A Foot in Four Counties**

21ml. 09.00 Cowden Station. (GR TQ476417). Circular walk, visiting the counties of Kent, East Sussex, West Sussex and Surrey. Lunch stop at Ashurst Wood. Sandwiches and snacks available in the pub, but no cooked food. **C:** David Thornton

### **Thu Sep 12 Cinque Ports 100 Revisited: Walk 1 - Hastings – Rye**

12.2ml. 10.10 Hastings Railway Station. (GR TQ815096). Linear (train to Hastings, train back from Rye: train leaves Ashford 9.24am, arrives Hastings 10.06). **C:** Graham Smith

### **Sun Sep 22 Alliteration G - Goodnestone x2**

23ml. 09.00 Faversham Recreation Ground. (GR TR018610). Linear finishing at Adisham station. **C:** Peter Jull

### **Sun Sep 29 Alliteration F Frogham & Frogholt**

24 ml 09:00 Reinden Wood car park off A260. (GR TR213408). Pub lunch. **C:** Peter Jull

### **Sun Oct 6 Autumnal Amble**

21ml. 09.00 Cranbrook c.p. (GR TQ777359). Lunch Stop Scotney Castle. **C:** Neal O'Rourke

### **Sun Oct 13 Toys Are Us**

20ml. 09:00 Toys Hill c.p. (GR TQ469517). Paths N and S of Greensand Ridge. Pub stop Crockham Hill. **C:** David Thornton,

### **Thu Oct 17 Cinque Ports 100 Revisited: Walk 2 - Rye-Appledore**

20.5ml. 09.50 Meet Rye Railway Station. (GR TQ919205). Linear (train to Rye, train back from Appledore: train leaves Ashford 9.24am, arrives Rye 9.45am, return train leaves Appledore 5.37pm, arrives Ashford 5.50pm). **C:** Graham Smith

### **Sun Nov 3 Loop the Loop**

17ml. 09.00 Newington village hall. CT18 8AU. (GR TR184376). Lunch at Lyminge. **C:** Eve Richards

### **Thu Nov 7 Cinque Ports 100 Revisited: Walk 3 - Appledore-Dymchurch**

17.7ml. 09.20 Meet Dymchurch Village Hall. (GR TR102294). Linear (bus from Dymchurch to Appledore, leaving Dymchurch 9.32am, arrives Appledore 10.27am). **C:** Graham Smith

### **Sun Nov 24 HHH 2.5 & 3**

18ml. 09.00 Kearsney Abbey. (GR TR285436). Pub stop. **C:** Peter Jull

### **Sun Dec 1 The Leybourne Chase**

20ml. 09.00 Meet on Oxley Shaw Lane alongside Leybourne School. (GR TQ691590). Circular route around the footpaths of Leybourne, West Malling, Addington & Birling. Pub lunch in Addington. **C:** David Thornton,

### **Thu Dec 5 Cinque Ports 100 Revisited: Walk 4 - Dymchurch-Folkestone**

14.8ml. 09.35 Meet Folkestone Bus Station, Bouverie Square. (GR TR226359). (park in Castle Hill Avenue, Bouverie Road West, Jinton Road or Earls Avenue – leave time to walk to bus station). Linear - bus leaves Folkestone Bus Station 9.53am, arrives Dymchurch 10.32am.

**C:** Graham Smith

### **Sun Dec 8 Family Christmas Dinner**

Family Christmas Dinner at London Beach Country Hotel, near Tenterden, preceded by a seven mile walk led by Neal O'Rourke.

### **Sat Dec 14 Christmas Cruise around Calais**

c14ml. 07.20 By P&O Desk, Dover Eastern Docks for 8.25am sailing. Allow plenty of time to find a parking space. (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

### **Fri Dec 27 Post Christmas Sevenoaks Stroll**

c17ml. 09.00 Meet at Shipbourne. (GR TQ592522). Starting in road opposite church, parking in layby. Pub stop in Sevenoaks. Map: Exp 147.

**C:** Dave Sheldrake

## **KENT GROUP COMMITTEE**

Chairman/newsletter editor – Graham Smith,  
Secretary – Stephanie Le Men,  
Treasurer/walks secretary – Peter Jull,  
Membership/data protection secretary – Neil Higham,  
Life President – Brian Buttifant,  
Members

Don Arthurs, Joy Davies, Nick Dockree, Helen Franklin, David Thornton  
Sarah Turner while not on the Kent committee, is group equipment officer.  
Michael Headley maintains our excellent website.

Group gatherings are held on the first Monday in each month (except if a Bank Holiday when postponed to the second Monday) at the Rose & Crown, Wrotham, GR TQ612592.

## **FAMILY CHRISTMAS DINNER**

This year's Family Christmas Dinner will be on Sunday December 8 and will return to London Beach Country Hotel, just outside Tenterden. Kent LDWA members will recall we returned there last year after going to Chart Hills Golf Club, near Biddenden, for four years. Prices are £22.50 for two courses or £28.50 for three courses. If anyone wishes to pre-order a tea or coffee after the meal, this will cost £1.95 each and will need to be added to their form at the extra cost (otherwise it will cost more if ordered after the meal). Jan and Neal O'Rourke are making arrangements, with Neal again leading a seven-mile walk before the dinner. The walk will start at 9.30am, with lunch served at 1.30pm.

A booking form is included with this newsletter, so please fill it in and return it to Jan, with your cheque, made out to LDWA Kent Group, by November 9.

## **NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS**

### **Sevenoaks Circular**

Next year's Sevenoaks Circular will be held on Sunday March 22. Originally the event was planned for Sunday March 15, but we later learned that this date coincides with the dates for the LDWA's national AGM – being held at Easingwold in North Yorkshire between August 13-15 – so we have been able to change it.

The venue will again be at West Heath School, and will follow the same 30, 20 and 15 mile routes as it did this year. More details, including the date of the marshals' walk, in the next newsletter.

### **WEALD WALK**

This year's Weald challenge walk, the Andredsweald Circuit on Sunday July 14, based at Forest Row, was being held as Bryan Clarke and I were putting together this newsletter. A report and photos will appear in the next newsletter.

Next year's Weald walk will be the Heart of the Weald, which will be based at Wadhurst. Last time we put on the Heart of the Weald, in 2017, we offered distances of 10, 15, 20 and 26 miles. More details will be in the next newsletter.

### **WHITE CLIFFS CHALLENGE**

This year's WCC, on Saturday August 24, is almost upon us, and is part of the White Cliffs Walking Festival (taking place between August 22-28 – see item below) as usual. The event is based at St Margaret's Village Hall, and there will be two routes – of 32 miles and 18 miles. The routes will be almost the same as they were two years ago, but with some minor amendments. For example, there will still be **THAT** climb up from The Warren at Folkestone (no, not the one used on the Cinque Ports 100 last year – the WCC one is even steeper, but there will be a drinks stop at the top, which Dale Moorhouse has kindly agreed to provide). The marshals' walk is on Sunday August 11. Marshals' will be needed for the event, so if you can help, please contact Graham Smith (contact details above) as soon as possible.

### **KSS (KENT SURREY SUSSEX) TRIPLE CHALLENGE**

This year's Sussex Stride, part of the KSS Triple Challenge of 50-mile events, will be held over the weekend of September 21-22, based as usual at Longhill, near Brighton. The other KSS events are, of course, our own White Cliffs Challenge (the 50-mile version of which was held last year) and the Surrey Tops, which takes place next year.

Kent Group is organizing a checkpoint on the Sussex Stride, at our usual venue of East Dean (some 29 miles into the route). The marshals' walk will be held over the weekend of August 31-September 1. We are going to need marshals to help at our checkpoint, and so if you are interested and would still like to do the walk, please give some thought to entering the marshals' walk. Any volunteers are asked to contact Graham Smith (details above).

### **NEW LDWA LOGO DESIGNED BY KENT WOMAN**

As you may have read in Strider, the LDWA has a new logo – and it has been designed by a woman from our county!

The logo, showing a walker using a walking pole, was designed by LDWA member Rachel Cornish, from Canterbury, and follows a vote by members. It replaces the 'walking man' used by the LDWA since our association was founded in 1972.

Rachel's distinctive design was one of 10 presented to members in the April Strider for members to vote on. It was the clear winner.

Rachel has been an LDWA member for more than 30 years. Before that, when living in Surrey, she completed many challenge walks. More recently, she has only walked with her family including doing many long distance routes – including GR20, Tour de Mont Viso, Tour de Mont Blanc and the Haute Route. She has just completed her third Great Outdoors Challenge – walking 220 miles across Scotland, from Oban to Stonehaven.





Rachel has been an engineer/metallurgist and also worked in the power industry. She now runs two businesses, one of which specialises in web development, design and marketing.

She said: "I used to do design (logos, branding and web design) but not for more than 10 years. "Having been involved with marketing/branding for more than 15 years, I have seen many organisations gradually update their logos successfully - moving forwards without losing their identity.

"So I tried this with the LDWA logo: a simple walker, with day rucksack and stick."

LDWA chairman David Morgan said Rachel's design was "professional and versatile".

### **OUR HELEN WALKS 108 MILES IN JUST UNDER 59 HOURS**

Congratulations to Helen Franklin, who completed the gruelling Montane Spine Flare 'Ultra' event on June 22-24.

Entrants were required to complete 108 miles of the Pennine Way, from Edale to Hardraw, in 60 hours non-stop. Our Helen finished in 58 hours, 23 minutes and 31 seconds. There were 63 starters on the event, with 37 finishers, a retirement rate of 40 per cent. Well done, Helen!

### **HADRIAN HVNDRED – ANOTHER MAGNIFICENT EFFORT**

There was another tremendous showing from Kent LDWA members on this year's Hundred. Conditions on the event were very tough, with entrants having to endure winds of 40-50mph and heavy rain – as well as going up Cross Fell, at 2930 feet, the highest point in the Pennines. Conditions were so difficult that, out of 479 starters, there were 293 completions and 186 retirements.

Twenty-three Kent LDWA members started the event, with 13 finishing and 10 retiring. Three Kent members – Tony Barter, Marshall Elliott and Geoff Williamson – did their first Hundreds. Keith Warman completed his 29th, Andrew Boulden and Jill Green their 27th. Don Newman retired at checkpoint 7 on what would have been his 33rd Hundred. It was the first Hundred where Don had retired.

On the marshals' walk, where conditions were much better, with the entrants having wind but sunshine – and hardly any rain – Graham Smith completed his last Hundred (see story below), ex-Kent member Wendy Thurrell completed the walk in another amazing time – 29 minutes 15 seconds. It was Wendy's 10th Hundred, and her name will now go on the replica trig trophy of Kent LDWA members who have completed 10 Hundreds (donated by Jane Dicker in memory of her partner Keith). Out of 34 starters on the marshals' walk, there were only six retirements (which says all you need to know about the conditions!)

#### **Kent results:**

Don Arthurs (35.36).

Tony Barter (40.31).

Mark Bennett - retired checkpoint 9.

Andrew Boulden (31.36).

Jim Catchpole (43.54).

Andy Clark – retired checkpoint 5.

John Cook – retired checkpoint 7.

Malcolm Dyke (33.37).

Mark Dyke – retired checkpoint 4.

Marshall Elliott (43.40).

Nicola Foad (45.57).

Clifford Gray (44.01).

Jill Green (43.54).

Peter Jull – retired checkpoint 7.

Paul McAuliffe – retired checkpoint 10.

Stephanie Le Men (33.00).

Don Newman – retired checkpoint 7.

Judy Rickwood (47.40).

Dave Sheldrake – retired checkpoint 10.

Alan Stewart – retired checkpoint 10.

Martyn Turner – retired checkpoint 5.

Sarah Turner (40.23).

Keith Warman (45.47).

Geoff Williamson (26.20).

Marshals' event  
Graham Smith (42.53).  
Wendy Thurrell (29.15).

Apologies if anyone has been omitted from this list.

On the main event, Kent members manned a checkpoint at Watersmeeting Farm (70 miles), sharing duties with members of Wiltshire Group. Our members were Brian Buttifant, Graham Smith, Dale Moorhouse, Dave Thornton, Mike Attewell, Ros Humphreys, Clare Newman, Joy Davies, Mary Shillito, John Gilbert, Nick Dockree, Neil Higham and Andrew Melling. In addition, Michael Headley marshalled at the Dufton breakfast stop.

Below are some of the comments we received from happy customers at our checkpoint.

Dear Graham,

Just to say a very big thank you to you and the rest of the Kent Group for your recent kindness and hospitality.

The Hundred means more to me with each passing year.

Apart from anything else, it provides an opportunity to meet old friends, many of whom I only see once a year but nonetheless have become very good friends.

Of course, none of this is possible without the wonderful volunteers who give freely of their time to make it happen.

They all have my sincere gratitude.

With best wishes to you and the Kent Group.

Yours, Julian Pursey

Congratulations to everyone who took part, that was the toughest challenge I have ever been on and I will never forget the weather on Cross Fell!

The route was incredible (albeit not always visible!) the weather tempestuous but the atmosphere amazing. Thank you to the Northumbria LDWA for the hard work in ensuring the 100 was a success and all the volunteers on the checkpoints.

Many thanks also to Graham and the Kent LDWA (plus Jayne, Hilary and Simon from Norfolk and Suffolk LDWA) for helping me at CP9, I came in shivering after the events of the night, was walking at a snail's pace and a bit emotional at the thought that I was going to retire, but they warmed me up with blankets and a hot water bottle. Several cups of tea later and some food I set off again. I forgot all of my problems when I got to CP10 being greeted by a huge screen playing the Welsh Male Voice choir! Despite hallucinations later on the moorland I finally finished.

Thank you again

Robert Newell

Firstly can I echo everyone else's thanks to all organisers and marshals. Specifically I'd really like to send personal thanks to one marshal in particular.

On arriving at Watersmeeting Farm on Sunday afternoon I felt tired but OK. However within a couple of minutes I developed uncontrollable shaking and was really cold. The marshal quickly spotted me and kept giving more things to warm up. I ended up hugging two water bottles with a blanket and duvet round me for half an hour or so. The marshal also made sure I was well fed and watered.

Unfortunately my mind was fried and blame that on not getting her name. All I know was she was wearing yellow. I'd love her to know that without her actions and support I would probably have DNF'd. Instead I went on finish. Huge thanks.

Pete George

**See individual – and very different! - tales of the Hadrian Hvndred from Andy Clark, Peter Jull and Graham Smith below.**

### **CINQUE PORTS 100 REVISITED**

We are walking the route of last year's Cinque Ports 100 again – no, not in one go, but in a series of linear walks.

The walks will involve the use of public transport and will take place once a month – on Thursdays - starting in September. The walks are being led by Graham Smith, who said: "An awful lot of planning went into the Cinque Ports 100 last year, particularly with the route. And it is an excellent route, full of variety and interest, and I felt it would be a great shame to just forget about it now that the Cinque Ports 100 is behind us.

"We have rarely put on social walks on Thursdays, so it will be interesting to see what response we get to the walks."

Details of the first four walks are on the Social Walks programme above.

### **WALK REGISTERS (OR NOT!)**

Kent members may recall that in the last newsletter, an item about the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) reported that, for insurance liability purposes, it had become necessary for walk leaders to collect information from people taking part in our social walks. Those going on the walks were being asked to put their names and membership numbers on a form being circulated before the walk.

The LDWA now has a new insurer, which is taking a slightly more flexible line about this – with the result that it is no longer a requirement for walk leaders to take registers, but it is recommended good practice. This will probably come as a relief to many Kent members. It certainly came as a relief to the group chairman, who had forgotten to take the registers on two walks he led anyway. Phew!

### **PROMOTING KENT'S NAMED WALKS**

Kent boasts a profusion of named "long distance" walking routes across delightful rural landscapes, which we would like to encourage more people to use. To enable this, we would like to see more printed and online guides, clearer waymarking and more access to information about walking routes in Kent.

Following the success of Kent's guides to the Coast Path and Three River Valley Walks in West Kent

([www.kentramblers.org.uk/books](http://www.kentramblers.org.uk/books)), Kent Ramblers has initiated a project to improve the promotion, waymarking and condition of all Kent's named routes. This will include more guides and interpretation boards and clearer waymarking. We have designated funding originally set aside for possible litigation work that has not been needed and is now available for the project and we hope



to supplement this with profits from publications – the two guides mentioned have so far generated a surplus of £3500 between them.

It is important that all work is done in consultation with the relevant local authorities and we have just established what we hope will continue to be a constructive dialogue with Kent County Council. Some of the routes cross county boundaries so we will need liaise with other Ramblers' areas.

We are putting together a small team to tackle the work over several years and would be pleased to hear from anyone else who would like to be involved ([info@kentramblers.org.uk](mailto:info@kentramblers.org.uk)).

Explore Kent (part of Kent County Council) has 142 guides available for download from [Explorekent.org](http://Explorekent.org), ranging from easy access to more challenging walks, and also promotes long distance walking routes through its website and social media pages. Meanwhile Kent County Council would like to remind readers that while enjoying the great outdoors you can also help improve the countryside by reporting issues such as fly tipping and vandalism in a really easy way either through the Country Eye app (<https://countryeye.co.uk/>) or Kent County Council Public Rights of Way online Fault Reporting Tool (<https://webapps.kent.gov.uk/countrysideaccesscams/standardmap.aspx>) or (<https://www.gov.uk/report-flytipping> to report fly-tipping).

**Robert Peel, Kent Ramblers Secretary (and an LDWA member)**

#### **CHECKPOINT ON NEXT YEAR'S HUNDRED**

The Kent checkpoint on the 2020 Y100 Sir Fynwy (pronounced Fun-We) will be at Treadam (pronounced tre-adam), 70 miles. This will be an indoor checkpoint – a converted barn but properly done up, with heating etc (see picture). The spot is near part of the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail. It is actually a wedding venue, so that will make it quite an interesting location. It appears to be right beside the Hogs Head pub (also used as a wedding venue) but apparently the pub is in trouble and in recent times, has only opened up if enough people requested it (or presumably when they have an event on). What the situation will be in another 12 months is anyone's guess, but we shouldn't rely on getting a meal there on Saturday night! The CP is scheduled to open at 05.15 on the Sunday, closing time uncertain but probably around 21.00.

**So if anyone is happy to help on the checkpoint, please contact Brian Buttifant (contact details above).**



#### **PATH CLOSURE ON THE WEALDWAY**

The Wealdway is one of Kent's and East Sussex's many fine long distance walks, running some 83 miles between Eastbourne on the south coast and Gravesend on the bank of the Thames. It crosses some of the area's finest scenery including the South Downs, the High Weald, the Greensand ridge and the North Downs.

It also crosses the busy A21 from London to Hastings, through a tunnel just outside Tonbridge. Or rather it did, until the tunnel became dangerous a couple of years ago and the path had to be closed. This has caught walkers unawares because the signs advising closure are not encountered until it is too late to embark upon an acceptable diversion, forcing walkers along dangerous lanes. We have raised this with Kent County Council staff who have offered the following statement:

#### **'PLEASE NOTE: Advice for Walkers of the Wealdway concerning the A21 Underpass**

'Explore Kent and KCC Public Rights of Way would like you to be aware a section of the footpath ref: MU53A is currently closed due to safety reasons.

'The path is closed between Upper Haysden Lane and its junction with Public Footpath MU50 & Bridleway MU53. The underpass/tunnel section is closed as it has been deemed unsafe as it passes under road structures and elements which could potentially collapse.

'Highways England are progressing the work which has been delayed considerably due the complexity of the fault. They are currently unable to give an estimate for completion of the works but hope to be able to provide news about this soon.

'We advise that walkers be aware of this when attempting this section of the Wealdway – as there are no other alternative safe passages at the current time. We advise avoiding this part of the route until there is further notice from Highways England.

'There have also been reported issues with the Interactive Rights of Way map – please report this to KCC Public Rights of Way if this affects you.

'As ever, for information about walking routes and updates please see [www.ExploreKent.org](http://www.ExploreKent.org) as well as our social media channels.'

We are grateful that some publicity is now being given to the issue so that some of those planning to walk the Wealdway will be alerted and able to plan accordingly. However, the message is very unlikely to reach everyone affected and we think that, unless Highways England commit to a firm and not too distant date for repairing the tunnel, more action is required. We will therefore be putting together proposals for appropriate action and seeking to agree them with Kent County Council. Possibly we should set up a small working group to formulate better options and try to secure KCC support. If any members of Kent LDWA would like to be involved in such a working group, could they please email me on [robert.peel.mail@btinternet.com](mailto:robert.peel.mail@btinternet.com)

**Robert Peel**

#### **WHITE CLIFFS WALKING FESTIVAL**

This year's White Cliffs Walking Festival, taking place between August 22-28, will be opened by Kate Ashbrook, vice-president and chair of The Ramblers, general secretary of the Open Spaces Society, vice-chair of the Campaign for National Parks and patron of the Walkers Are Welcome towns network.

This will be the seventh walking festival organised by the White Cliffs Ramblers, with the opening ceremony at 10am on Deal Memorial Bandstand on the morning of the first day.

This year's festival will comprise 42 walks, including our 32-mile White Cliffs Challenge on August 24 (see above) and Graham Smith's 18-mile Three Pits Walk, which visits the sites of the three coal mines which closed during the 1980s, on August 26, and Graham's 10-mile Fish and Chip Walk on Friday August 23 (see list of social walks above for details of these two walks). Most walks will be in areas of Dover and Deal, both towns having Walkers Are Welcome status. The full programme is on the festival website [www.whitecliffswalkingfestival.org.uk](http://www.whitecliffswalkingfestival.org.uk), as well as on a colour brochure.

### **BOB WEARE**

Kent LDWA members will be very sad to hear about the death of Bob Weare.

Bob, who died after a serious illness, was a strong walker has completed several long distance paths. He lived in Folkestone and was 65. He leaves a son and daughter.

Bob's funeral was at Barham Crematorium on Thursday July 18. Our thoughts go out to Bob's family at this time.

### **CRICKET, LOVELY CRICKET**

In recent years, it has become something of a tradition in Kent LDWA that some of us go to a T20 (20 overs a side) cricket match at Kent County Cricket Club's St Lawrence ground in Canterbury. This year it's going to be the Kent Spitfires' match against the Sussex Sharks on Friday August 16, which starts at 7pm (and is due to finish at 9.45pm). If you are interested in going, tickets are £25 and can be booked either by telephoning the cricket club on 01227 456886, or book online by visiting [www.kentcricket.co.uk](http://www.kentcricket.co.uk). So if anyone wants to go, it is suggested you get there by 6.45pm and we will meet at the cricket club's Old Dover Road entrance. We can meet by the Lime Tree cafe and have a drink before play starts.



**Above: the walkers by the Waiting Miner statue, just outside the site of Betteshanger, the last Kent pit to close; the group by the site of Snowdown pit.**

### **THE FOUR PITS WALK: March 30 By Graham Smith**

Twelve of us came on my 40 mile Four Pits Walk this year, and we enjoyed some delightful sunny weather as we explored some of Kent's industrial heritage.

This walk visits the sites of the four Kent coal mines - Chislet, which closed in 1969, and Betteshanger, Tilmanstone and Snowdown, which all closed after the miners' strike in the 1980s. It is an Anytime Challenge, so it gave me great pleasure to hand out completion certificates and badges at the end.

We met at Fordwich and started walking at 8am, following the route along the River Stour and then going up to Westbere and following the A28 to the former pit village of Hersden, which served Chislet. Sadly, it is no longer possible to walk a couple of hundred yards to see some evidence of the pit, as scrub and undergrowth block any views (however it is possible to view the site of the pit a few miles later, from Stodmarsh Nature Reserve). So we plodded on, going through Chitty and Chislet to Grove Ferry, where we had our first break by the river.

Then we set off again, going through the nature reserve to Stodmarsh, Wickhambreaux, and then a nice open path to Wingham. From there we followed field paths to Goodnestone, where we had our lunch stop. It was then 12.30, the sun was out, we were thirsty – and the Fitzwater Arms was very welcome!

Suitably refreshed, we marched on to Eastry, where we had ice creams, then Betteshanger Park – built on the site of the last Kent pit to close - to see the statue of the Waiting Miner. The Waiting Miner is the principal monument to the Kent miners, but certainly not the only one. The Waiting Miner began life in Yorkshire and was then moved to Richborough Power Station – long since closed but which was powered by Kent coal – before being re-sited on Dover seafront, near the offices of the National Coal Board and the National Union of Mineworkers. After a campaign from former miners, which appeared to have been largely carried out in the pages of the East Kent Mercury (where I used to work), the statue was moved to its new (and hopefully permanent) location. We then moved on, past the nearby village of Betteshanger, to Northbourne.

Then we approached Tilmanstone, which gave its name to the pit and where the spoil tip is still visible, with a quick but welcome break and on to Nonington. Unfortunately the Royal Oak, which we have used as a very welcome watering hole on this walk in the past, is now closed, but we had all topped up our fluids at the village shop in Eastry. We carried on to the site of the last pit, Snowdown, where one of the party, Nasib Cheema – who had been suffering very bad blisters – decided to call a halt, and ask her husband to come out and pick her up (Dale Moorhouse – who had never intended to do the entire walk anyway – had previously stopped at Eastry).



It was now 6.30 and just beginning to get dark. We pressed on to Aylesham, the village which served Snowdown, passing the Payday at Snowdown Colliery statue, going through the village and taking a sharp left across field paths to Adisham. By now it was dark, so torches were on, and we all (more or less!) stayed together for the rest of the walk. We reached Bokesbourne and then Littlebourne before taking the usual woodland and minor road route back to Fordwich.

We finally got back at 9.20pm, and it gave me great pleasure to hand out completion certificates and souvenir badges. Well done, everyone. You were all stars.

The Four Pits Walk is an Anytime Challenge, and the route description – updated last year – can be downloaded from the Kent LDWA website. My Three Pits Walk, visiting the sites of Tilmanstone, Snowdown and Betteshanger, is on the social walks programme on August 26 as part of the White Cliffs Walking Festival (see listings above).



The first picture shows us having a break just after the Seven Sisters; the second shows us on Firle Beacon; and the third shows us on Wilmington Hill.

#### **A SOUTH DOWNS LOOP: April 19 (Good Friday) By Graham Smith**

Once again, we had a wonderful day on the annual Good Friday South Downs Loop.

It has got to be at least 20 years now that I have been putting this walk on our social walks programme, and this year there were 17 of us, 10 of us doing the 26 mile route which went out to the terrific viewpoint of Firle Beacon, and five joining Nicola Foad on the 20 mile route.

We actually enjoyed some of the best weather we have ever had on this walk, and that was in contrast to last year, when we had the worst – and ironically, just about a record turnout, with more than 30 people turning up.

For once, I arrived early for the start of the walk (I usually get there just before we set off, with most of the walkers waiting for me) – something which was commented on by Alan Stewart! We set off just after 9am and followed the South Downs Way to Beachy Head and Birling Gap, and that luscious turf made it feel like we were walking on a green carpet. It was lovely to be walking on the South Downs again (the last time had been my walk on New Year's Day, when the weather had also been excellent).

After Birling Gap came the Seven Sisters, where we naturally got a bit strung out. But at the end of the Sisters, we found a nice hollow for a break, with fine views across to Seaford, the Cuckmere Valley and the South Downs. Then we dropped down to follow the Cuckmere for a mile or so until we were near Alfriston. Then we parted company, my group heading up the hillside and Nicola's keeping to the river for their lunch stop at Alfriston.

We carried on to the South Downs ridge, where we turned left for Firle Beacon. There we found another nice hollow, by the trig point, to have our lunch. And here David Thornton departed. David was walking the entire South Downs Way (lucky him, particularly in that fine weather) and was heading for Lewes, where he had booked a B&B for the night (see the tale of his exploits below).

We then carried on along the ridge, gradually dropping down to Alfriston, where some of us went to a pub, others had an ice cream, and some of us did both. Just after Alfriston (where Barbara Hutton, who earlier had slipped over, decided to stop the walk), we were following the river bank, when we had a slightly uncomfortable experience with an inquisitive cow. The cow seemed quite playful but did get a little closer to us than some of us would have liked, but luckily we were able to shoo her away.

We then had the fairly long slog up Wilmington Hill (this is the route we do in good weather – the shorter South Downs Way route is the one we do in poor weather, like last year), but we were rewarded with fine views. After the usual hilltop photocall, we followed the ridge before dropping down, past the field of alpacas, to Jevington, and our usual stop at the Eight Bells (well, on a hot day like that we were pretty thirsty). Then it was the South Downs Way route, with one last climb before following the ridge and eventually dropping down to the starting point at the end of Eastbourne seafront, arriving at 7.10pm. I later learned that Nicola's group had got back two hours earlier.



Many congratulations to Nasib Cheema, who completed the 26-mile walk despite severe blisters.

Well, that South Downs Loop, whether it be the 26 mile version or the 20 miler, has to be one of the classic walks in south-east England, and we did it in fine conditions. It will be on our social walks programme again next year – on Good Friday, of course.



**Starting out on the TTT at Greenwich on a cold February morning.**

#### **TIMEBALL AND TELEGRAPH TRAIL By Peter Jull**

##### **Day 1 – Sunday February 3.**

After a record number of inquiries about this walk it was almost disappointing that the number of starters was a not quite a record 31. Not disappointing was the frostily crisp blue sky views from the start line making Canary Wharf look spectacular, and closer by the walk theme time ball made resplendent by sunlight atop its Observatory building. Off across and out of the park, a mile of urban streets reached the Capital Ring. Remnant snow crunched underfoot to soon reach the vicinity of Severndroog Castle to pause and disseminate information about the semaphore telegraph station that, more than 200 years before, stood nearby on the shoulder of Shooters Hill. Many were relieved by the relief provided by the open toilets by Oxleas Wood cafe and a debutant departed, deterred by the pace. Recounting so many there and later was an added challenge that didn't always compute. By the time elevenses were taken at the east end of East Wickham open space, mud was becoming less solidly frozen but across a following playing field snow persisted in shady spots and scattered lumps of deceased snowmen.

Green Chain Walk signs perfected our perambulation of Lesnes Abbey Wood including the 172ft high point on the walk which felt more to those expecting a flatter day. From up there a little dog befriended and followed us far so that at the leaving point the last of us felt it incumbent to phone its collar numbered owner. Good deed done and doggy entrusted to another dog walker willing to wait for the reuniting, the dog group regrouped with the main group so the whole group, 31 again with the addition of one whose late train had given us 25 minutes head start, could proceed to the Thames. At a smooth slack tide the river was looking its best and soon led to lunch in Erith. Regathered and recounted again in the Riverside Gardens the Thames Path led out onto Crayford Marshes. Turning inland, the Darent and then Cray were ebbing to exposed mud. At the edges of Dartford's sprawl, six stragglers went astray and while leader searched the leading lot wandered wrong as well. But all reached the station soon enough, or later, to finish a quicker than expected delightful day's walking.

##### **Day 2 – Sunday February 17**

Assorted trains, buses and automobiles gathered many walkers at Dartford station. Briefly through the town centre to Central Park for a brief briefing and confirmatory count, 32 to be shepherded and oft recounted through the day.

Out of town on the Darent Valley Way then outside the M25 head for the hills to reveal the range of speeds to be accommodated. A lost count number of burnt out joy rides blotted the woodscape - perplexing how they ever got among such denseness. Atop the next hill a modern telecoms mast and water tower have supplanted the Swanscombe semaphore telegraph station now separated from the village by a fattened A2. 200 years of trees have obstructed the view back to Shooters Hill but moving on, winter sparse vegetation allowed glimpses of sight lines the prominence had provided towards Gads Hill. A late elevenses in Southfleet churchyard and the potential lunch pub there was passed too soon. Power professionals would appreciate the proliferation of pylons marching with us the next miles. It was peak hungry time on arrival at Jeskyns country park and the small cafe there. Its 16 inside seats were never going to be enough for us, let alone the tenfold dog walkers also exercising the park. But February was being balmy almost under blue skies so the plentiful picnic tables sufficed. Coffee and toilets patiently queued for; with inactivity the breeze began to chill so on across fast rail and road into Shorne Wood country park instead. Safely navigated to the other side, potential lunch pub two was passed too late. Last big hill past then above Dickens' Gads Hill to where the semaphore telegraph



once stood. Modern trees and houses again obscure the sight lines bar glimpses that need the telescopes they had to see 10 miles. Last stretch to the edge of Rochester then long downhill from the bottom of which, despite averaging 3++ mph all day, the leading lot gazelled ahead to ensure the 4:21 to Victoria. Now they'll have to do the castle bit at the start of the next leg.

#### **Day 3 – Sunday March 10**

By the time trains had deposited walkers at Rochester station the cathedral bells had stopped but the sun had come out. Marched to Rochester Castle to do the bit shortcutted at the end of the last leg, 18 were force photographed in front of the keep, its streaming flag stretching its shrouds. Michael's hat retrieved and crashing tree limb dodged the bells had begun again, but only audible downwind as we crunched twiglets and larger along park paths. Rochester invisibly became Chatham and a short riverside stretch with progress preventing gusts before many steps up to the grand naval war memorial. Down the other side Chatham morphed into Gillingham. Freshly toileted and missing man found, more riverside through a boatyard with rattling rigging screaming before becoming country park. A three-bench sheltered spot sufficed for elevenses viewing tide out mud flat grey before the biggest fence flattening faller of the day forced a furlong detour. Staying on the Saxon Shore Way a potential lunch pub was eschewed for lack of picnic comfort. The next was more timely and with nearby playground benching, but there was no room at the inn with space only in the stable (smoking shelter) and the wait for food too long. Departure coincided with a short shower but before Callum Hill was topped the sun was back lighting the views its telegraph station would have had.

Blown down the other side, a struggling straggler signed off at Kemsley station; the rest country parked through Sittingbourne but couldn't avoid the trading estate that in the Kent version of Monopoly takes the place of Old Kent Road. That littered landscape left behind rurality resumed gently up to Tonge's telegraph hill. A bonus not on the main Admiralty to Deal line but a branch to The Nore anchorage. It's a pimple compared to other hills but enough, surrounded by flatland marsh. The next hill is higher leading to lamb land with essence of lambing shed then Conyer Creek's incoming tide blued by the now clear sky. 50 knot winds blessedly behind us for most of the day, the abating breeze blew in right ears for the final four fields to the finish at Teynham.

#### **Day 4 – Sunday March 24**

Signals from The Admiralty strengthened slightly with 19 walkers rapidly reaching rural out of Teynham. Picnic perfect logs atop Ospringe's Telegraph Bank were reached too soon, so just a tree free pause to view the views the telegraph operators would have had. Down and up and down to Ospringe's churchyard which was reached more timely for elevenses. South of the M2 it was fairly flat barring one valley crossing before a suddenly steep ascent of Windmill Hill. At the top Roman era earthworks within which the shutter station was contemporaneously described as standing are hardly identifiable, now overgrown with trees and ferns. Picnic lunchers left at benches the only slippery mud of the day sloped down to the Rose & Crown. Their kitchen was caught unprepared so longer than intended was spent in their garden basking in post equinox sunshine. Up the adjacent hill to a country park installed viewing point (nicknamed the pulpit) to see what would have been seeable in pre-tree days. Embarrassed away by Rex, Ian Paisleying loudly from the top with innocent picnickers nearby, it was back into orchard country but blossoms not yet blooming. Up to cross the NDW then down with grand views of grand Godmersham Park to cross the Stour at a picturesque spot. Up the valley's other side it was time to leave the Trail for Chilham station two miles off. Nearly there and the level crossing gates dropped against us. But the train was Canterbury bound and 5 minutes spare to get round the corner to the London bound platform.

#### **Day 5 – Sunday April 14**

A giant from Dorset seduced away several stalwarts and engineering works messing travel plans may have deterred others so it was 13 who left Chilham to retrace up Julliberrie Down back to the Trail proper. Through woods, budding bluebells were not yet blueing the undergrowth as they would in a week or two. Down and up Yockletts Bank is the steepest climb of the day and the valley views from the top impressive but short and one sided so not a semaphore spot. Through a pinking orchard we're too soon for the soon to come full effect. A rape field is fully yellow though before down and up to Bossingham village hall at a timely moment for lunch. Chairs stacked outside surreptitiously supplemented its jubilee bench. On a day when sheltered sunshine was warm but exposed cloudy was chilling, the stop coincided with a cloudy spell so we soon moved on. Down and up to reach a later field, two resident horses quietly joined the queue for our exit stile but they weren't Aintree entrants so were left behind. Down and up some more and the peaceful rurality enjoyed so far was noised away by traffic as we approached and crossed the A2 but soon blown away on the breeze as we reached telegraph station No1 of the day on Barham Downs at Womenswold. Crossing the approach field had a better view of the Admiralty bound line of sight though a gap in nearer hills which was blocked by trees at the actual spot as was the Deal bound view. A mid-afternoon, two thirds distance, stop in Nonington churchyard caught a sunny spell allowing a longer linger. With downs and ups now shallower the hill on which Telegraph Farm marks the spot is only relatively high and new (200 years) trees block the view again. A more narrowly reinstated rape field yellows trousers before the busiest road walked on all day which was still not very. More fields to minimise the urban distance of the last stretch into Deal and 27 miles was done in 9 hours at the Timeball Tower on the seafront. Debbie Wilkes, Cathy Waters, Jackie Barker, Peter Jull, Rex Stickland, Michael Headley and David Thomas from Surrey, Kent and London groups completed all 5 legs and 103 miles of the Timeball & Telegraph Trail.



Some of David's pictures taken on the Cleveland Way.

## THE CLEVELAND WAY: MARCH 6-11 By David Thornton

The Cleveland Way had been cropping up in conversations in the last year or two, with nothing but positive comments about the variety it offers, so I decided I would see for myself. The path links up with the Yorkshire Wolds Way in Filey, which, while planning the walk, reminded me of a chap I bumped into last April on the YWW who had already done the Cleveland Way and was carrying on to complete the two of them in one hit. He too was full of praise.

So with all planning in place, I jumped on a train at West Malling at 6.05 on March 6 and eventually arrived in York at 10.30. This gave me an hour or so to have a very quick scout around York before jumping on the 31X bus for a scenic but rather bone rattling 80 minute journey to Helmsley, a very attractive small town, where one end of the Cleveland Way starts. After a quick photo at the start, which the bus driver very kindly offered to do, I was on my way. I guess a lot of people would plan the journey to Helmsley in a slightly more sedate manner, arriving later in the day, to stay overnight and begin the walk the following morning. I always prefer, where possible, to get an early start from home, so I can get a small chunk of walking done on the first day. The key of course is the location of accommodation.



No sooner had I started walking than the heavens opened, so it was straight on with the waterproofs, which certainly earned their keep during the next five days, more so than on any other National Trail I had done. The rain continued unabated for three hours until I reached Sutton Bank, which is where the main ridge of the walk starts and continues for 50 miles, all the way to the coast at Saltburn-on-Sea. When I reached Sutton Bank, it was almost as if the weather suddenly said "Here you go Davey lad, we'll stop for now, part the clouds and drop in a bit of sunshine so you can feast your eyes on this". The timing of that break in the weather couldn't have been better. Sutton Bank, the finest inland view in England, so they say. I'm sure there are others that might put in a counter claim to that, but I certainly can't think of any better. It was worth every drop of rain. Daylight was running out, so I dragged myself away from the view and headed off to my first overnight stop at High Paradise Farm, 12 miles into the walk and a great find. Ginny inherited the farm from her parents about five

years ago and has made many improvements since. She added about five small self catering rooms about two years ago, perfect for walkers of the Cleveland Way. Without these in place it would have been very difficult to locate any other nearby accommodation. Very well equipped, I would highly recommend a stay here. My room had a roaring log burning fire when I walked in!

Day two took me about 21 miles through Osmotherley and on to Clay Bank, where I would drop down from the path for about two miles to stay at the Wainstones Hotel in Great Broughton. This was quite a challenging section, particularly the last five miles, which took me over what are known locally as the five peaks. Their difficulty wasn't helped by the fact that some really bad and very windy weather rolled in. With steep and wet flagstone steps, along with driving rain and gusty winds made this section rather tricky. I could have left the path a little earlier to drop down into Great Broughton but I'm glad I persevered to my pre-set goal, as after a comfortable overnight stay, I was rewarded with a gloriously crystal clear day on Friday. The hotel very kindly dropped me off up the road at Clay Bank that morning, to save me the trudge back up the road to the start. I had a super day Friday: 24 miles, which took me across Urre Moor, Ingleby Moor, Battersby Moor, Warren Moor, a climb up to Captain Cook's Monument, a small detour up to Roseberry Topping, which is quite a landmark in the area, before continuing east and finally dropping down into Saltburn-on-Sea. The whole 55 mile inland section was fantastic, with one tiny exception, and it really is a minor point. Pretty much the entire stretch was laid with heavily rolled type 1 building material, heavily rolled local stone gravel, local stone brick steps or large flat local stone paving slabs. The reality is that if these materials weren't used, its popularity and heavy footfall would leave this section of the Cleveland Way cut up to the point that it would become almost un-walkable. However, while essentially practical and pleasing on the eye, these materials make the ground very hard, almost like walking on tarmac and after two and half days of that surface my shins were really suffering by the time I reached the coast. After a really good overnight stay at the Victoria Pub and Guest House in Saltburn-on-Sea, you can imagine therefore my relief to suddenly find myself walking on green, lush, bouncy grass, as I commenced the coastal section of the trail.

Looking back, after a mile so, I remember the stark contrast of the rather picturesque Victorian seaside town of Saltburn-on-Sea in the foreground, while in the background just a mass of chimney pots and smoke that made up the heavily industrialised city of Middlesbrough and Teeside. My day continued for 23 miles to the town of Whitby, along what is regarded as some of the most iconic coastline in England, passing the wonderful little seaside town of Staithes along the way. Finding accommodation in Whitby would be quite easy early March, you would think, even on a Saturday. It wasn't so much the lack of availability, but the fact that not a single bed and breakfast would do one night only. Not that I could locate anyway. The same went for Scarborough, which was my next stop. I prefer to use a traditional bed and breakfast when I can, but in the end I was forced to use Airbnb accommodation on both Saturday and Sunday night, both of which were really good. After leaving Whitby early on Sunday morning, heading 21 miles towards Scarborough, passing through Robin Hood's Bay, conditions deteriorated quite rapidly, with a westerly snow blizzard blowing heavily for about four hours. I suppose I can be thankful it wasn't blowing easterly from the North Sea. That really would have been grim in early March. Of course, as always, I'd





checked the weather forecast the night before, so I was prepared and in reality so long as you're well toggled up, these conditions never seem as bad as they might otherwise have been and in fact the additional challenge spices up the walk still further. I quite liked Scarborough, certainly more so than Whitby, which I wasn't that taken by at all and in my view well overhyped.

I had nine miles to do on the Monday morning with a train to catch at 10.15 from the finish at Filey. So I was up and out at 6.00, just as morning was breaking, with an amazing clear sky and a fresh, brisk and chilly northerly breeze to help me along my way. That last gentle stroll into Filey capped off what was a coastal section every bit as good people say. Just non-stop, breathtaking coastal views and a complete change to what was an equally impressive inland section.

In contrast to the subtle beautiful rolling countryside of the Yorkshire Wolds Way, the Cleveland Way sits immediately on top, like its bigger, more dramatic and spectacular relative. It's every bit as good as people say and I shall certainly continue to sing its praises.



**From left: The Humber Bridge; Swin Dale; the art installation, Enclosure Rites near West Knapton – part of the Wander – Art on the Yorkshire Wolds Way project; my tent and car at the camp site.**

#### **THE YORKSHIRE WOLDS WAY: April 28-May 1      By Graham Smith**

The Yorkshire Wolds Way is a fine, 79-mile National Trail going from near Hull to the coastal town of Filey, where it links with the Cleveland Way. It follows the line of the Wolds and although the scenery cannot really be described as spectacular, and you never go anywhere near 1,000 feet, it is very pleasant. I walked the YWW in just over three days, to get myself prepared for the Hadrian 100 marshals' walk, and absolutely loved it. I have done much walking in Yorkshire, but this was a part of 'God's own county' with which I was unfamiliar and I really enjoyed the undulating countryside, delightful villages and fine paths.

I suppose I approached the YWW in a slightly unconventional way. I drove to the excellent Yorkshire Wolds Way Caravan and Camping site, near West Knapton – about 21 miles from the end of the trail – pitched my tent and left it there, doing two and a bit days' walking before returning. I had planned to take a bus from West Knapton to Scarborough, where I was to get a train to Hull, but a very helpful man named Del, who works at West Farm – where the camp site is situated – kindly gave me a lift to Scarborough.

The Yorkshire Wolds Way actually starts at Hessle, a few miles from Hull, and I thought it would be an idea to actually start the walk from the city itself. I have to say this was not the best idea I have ever had for a walk. I thought it would be an easy walk but – like so many cities – Hull is a bit dirty (I could say more ...), with lots of traffic, which doesn't make for good walking. I thought I would walk to the Humber Bridge and then take the pedestrian walkway to walk over this fantastic, one and a half mile long, structure, which for 16 years was the world's longest single span suspension bridge. But the laborious route I tried to follow from the city centre took me to the Humber Estuary, which was where I wanted to be, but a good couple of miles from the bridge. I had not been able to start walking until 1.30pm, and by the time I got to the bridge, I could not be bothered to find the access point to the pedestrian walkway and I was getting tired and quite fed up, so I abandoned the idea of walking over the bridge, found the start of the YWW at Hessle and followed the first few miles of the route to a very nice B&B I had booked at Melton. It was a lesson



learned about planning (and eight days later, when returning from Northumberland after the HH marshals' walk, I did walk over the bridge – and very memorable it was too). The Humber Bridge makes a fine start to the Yorkshire Wolds Way, and my advice to anyone planning the route is to take a bus from Hull to Hessle, go to the country park where you can get onto the Humber Bridge pedestrian walkway, and walk over the bridge before you start the National Trail proper.

The following day, fortified by a fine breakfast at the B&B in Melton, was excellent, walking 28 miles to Millington. It was good walking all the way – nice woods, decent (but not spectacular) views, good paths and well signposted (as you would expect on a National Trail).

I had my first stop at Brantingham, and then followed more nice paths and tracks to Swin Dale, which was delightful: lush walking surface and a good path to follow, with flowers either side. Then there was a very good high level stretch to Newbald Wold. I was striding along, and when I calculated I had done a good 14-15 miles, I stopped for a quick lunch. Shortly after that the YWW went to Goodmanham, and I had a (soft) drink at the very nice pub in the village. Then there was a very pleasant stretch to Londesborough Park.

After that the going was a bit rural, which I found a little tedious. I had been planning to take a short cut to Millington, leaving the YWW and taking the road to the village. But the guide book said the short stretch along Warren Dale was one of the best of the entire route, so that's what I took. The views were not as extensive as described in the book because it was a bit cloudy, but it was still very good. I dropped down to Millington, arriving at about 6.15pm.

I had arranged to stay at Millington Village Hall, which walkers can use as a kind of bunk barn for £12. So that was very welcome, but the only issue was that it was a Monday, and Monday was the night the village Scrabble group used the village hall. I was asked to join in, and although I had not played Scrabble for a good 40 years, I could hardly refuse. Needless to say, the four Millington Scrabble players took apart their visitor from Kent on the Scrabble board, but it was still a quite enjoyable evening. The following day, walking 26 miles to the camp site at West Farm, was the best day's walking I had done so far this year. I was up just after seven, and walking by eight, and at first it was pretty foggy, which didn't lift for a good two hours. The paths seemed very good, and there must have been fine views in good weather.

The fog lifted just as I passed Huggate, which was followed by a long descent to Horse Dale, with a very nice march along the bottom to Fridaythorpe. Then a short trek to Thixen Dale, and another fine march along the bottom to the village (Thixendale) that gives its name to the dale. There was an easy climb from Thixendale, and then good paths to go over Vessel Hill, before a long stretch which curved round to Deep Dale, where I stopped for lunch dot on 1pm, before dropping down to the historic Wharram Percy, a deserted medieval settlement situated in a beautiful, peaceful valley.

After that the walking was good, but not as good as it had been in the first part of the day. But it was easy going on fine clear paths and tracks, and I realised that I was going to get to the camp site at about five. After Wintringham there was a steep climb to the Deep Dale (yes, another one) Plantation, taking me to the earthworks which I followed to the tarmac road leading to the camp site. The sun was shining, so I lay down on the ground beside my tent and basked in the sun. Lovely!

The last stretch, to Filey, was another very fine day. The route initially follows the top of the escarpment on good paths, so I was able to crack on and had my first stop at Garston (9-10 miles). Unfortunately, after another 4-5 miles, I made a silly mistake which cost me a good 40 minutes and the best part of an extra two miles. I got to the edge of one of those lovely Wolds dales, with a very inviting valley (with lush grass) below me. Foolishly I went into that delightful Wolds dale and followed that lovely path along the valley bottom. It was very nice, but I started to get worried when I could not see any Yorkshire Wolds Way signs. I took what I thought was the correct path uphill, then when I saw a sign saying PRIVATE PROPERTY ahead, I realised I had gone wrong. So I had to retrace my steps all the way back to where I had taken the wrong turn, so I was not a happy bunny. Oh well – another lesson learned.

From then on, I took care to follow the signs and the guide book closely. There was a nice woodland section to Stocking Dale, and then an open rural section to Muston. It was interesting to see how the landscape was changing as I got near Filey. Another mile, and I was in Filey, taking the recommended short cut to the cliffs and the official end/start of the Yorkshire Wolds Way. I could not resist striding along the cliffs to Filey Brigg, with memories of when I was last there, with Mike Ratcliff, several years ago, at the end of the Cleveland Way. The Filey cliffs were quite spectacular, and a fitting end to the walk.

I made my way to the bus station, to find that there was no definite bus service to Malton (and the camp site), as I had been led to believe. So I rang the camp site, and it was arranged for Del, to come and pick me up.

Yes, the Yorkshire Wolds Way is a fine walk, and highly recommended. I used the Yorkshire Wolds Way official National Trail guide, written by Tony Gowers and Roger Ratcliffe, published by Arum in association with Natural England. This has 1:25,000 OS maps for the whole route, as much background information as walkers would need, details of related circular walks – such as the magnificent Flamborough Head, a few miles along the coast from Filey (which would make an excellent alternative finish to the walk – although I didn't do it on this occasion, as I have been there before). There is a full, downloadable accommodation guide available from the Yorkshire Wolds Way National Trail website, <https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/yorkshire-wolds-way>.



Pictures taken on Peter's Alliteration D walk.



## **ALLITERATION D, DUNKIRK AND DODDINGTON: Sunday June 16 By Peter Jull**

Nine were evacuated from the Dunkirk roads, passing verges and fields. The scruffy discouragement of a saw mill negotiated, it was downhill through woods to the railway and then a peripatetic perambulation of Perry Wood. In more open country, forecast drizzle began wetting, so waterproofs were on and off. A poppy prettied rape field readily reciprocated that precipitation on lower limbs as they pushed through. Eastling church porch suited sandwichers but the pub was monopolised by fathers being treated on their day. From lunch the walk went to Seed and then the beheading of John the Baptist church to alliterate Doddington. Drying skies brightened the route back east, passing a rape field this time blued by flowering weeds. Re-crossing the railway provided lovely long views of Boughton church but crossing the golf course bearings were lost as was Rex (again!). For once the sound and sight of A2 traffic was welcomed as it signalled the end was nigh. A steady but long climb up to Dunkirk church and a short stretch on level road and the end was reached. 24+1 miles in 9¼ hours.



**Scenes from the trip made by Bet, Helen and Stephanie to do the West Highland Way.**

## **WALKING THE WEST HIGHLAND WAY: Fri-Mon April 19-22: By Bet Benn, Helen Franklin and Stephanie Le Men**

We had agreed months ago that we would all like to walk the WHW. Bet had already completed part of the route from its start in Milngavie to Bridge of Orchy some time ago but suggested that we start in Fort William and take the path from north to south. This turned out to be a great plan. We were challenging ourselves to complete as much as we could in 3.5 days. We travelled up on the Caledonian Sleeper on the Thursday night, which arrived in Fort William just before 10am on Good Friday. We slept in the seated compartment rather than a comfy couchette, and unfortunately our journey involved a change of trains in the middle of the night in Edinburgh, which did mean we were not as fresh as we could have been...

Oh, and just to make the walk more fun and real, we all agreed that we wanted to camp/wild camp over the weekend, so we carried all our own gear, rather than use the luggage services available.

### **First day - 23 miles**

So, we got off the train at Fort William and had a coffee break in the station café. Bet insisted on starting from the official start, so we walked up to the marker at the top of the High Street and down again to the station. Soon out of town, we climbed a long wide track out of Fort William, with good views of Ben Nevis to our left, free from any clouds. We'll come back to that another day, we all agreed. We then took a narrow footpath and as we came over the hill, we had a nice view over our first loch. A lot of people were taking a break there and so did we! It was getting warm. Here we were in Scotland, in April slapping on the sun cream. Then on to Kinlochleven via a long clearly defined path where we met and chatted to some American tourists actually walking in the same direction as we were. After a tiring descent into town, we were all grateful to grab some supplies at the Co-op and have a short break.

We needed to crack on, we had started the day quite late enough, and dusk was approaching, so up and up on a beautiful track with good views towards Kingshouse. Near the start of the Devil's Staircase, where we would soon descend towards our camp site, we met a guy who was riding the trail with a mountain bike. He was a bit worried about cycling down off the Devil's Staircase



because of the rain gullies, but it was rideable, and we didn't pick him up as we followed, so he must have survived. Then the final push on to the newly refurbished Kingshouse Hotel, a vision in the distance that never seemed to get closer. There is a free wild camp space to the rear of the hotel. So once the tents were put up, we quite literally ran inside before the kitchen closed. We had a lovely meal, very tasty but the small bites really were small, so were supplemented by a decent dessert.

### **Second day - 23/24 miles**

We slept well as we were so tired having not slept much on the train and put in a good number of miles on the first day. We had breakfast, packed up, and were ready for a cup of coffee in the Kingshouse at 7.30am. Just as we left, we noticed a wonderful stag in the car park who was standing so still at first, he looked like a statue. He wished us good luck on our way for the day. We walked up the valley towards the Glencoe Centre and began climbing steadily on a very wide track, soon meeting other walkers coming from the opposite direction. Bet recognised Sarah Fullham from the Spine Event who was hiking with her family. Small world.

Then down to Rowardennan with views of Loch Tulla through the valley and up again on a steady climb. It was beginning to get warm again, but we could not manage to get a good picture of this loch because of the morning haze. We headed down, meeting locals and other WHW'ers towards Bridge of Orchy. Someone stopped Bet as she was wearing her Centurion T-shirt (running not the walking one), and we soon arrived at the Bridge of Orchy hotel for a well-deserved and tasty lunch, before starting again in the heat of the day.

It felt like quite a long six mile stretch to Tyndrum, the heat reached its peak around 3pm and we could constantly hear the noise of the busy A82. Not our favourite section. However, we met two young hikers walking south to north, who had forgotten to give back their keys to the YHA in Loch Lomond. They asked if we could take the keys back as it was on our route. Stephanie agreed to take on this additional weight, and hoped to remember to hand them over when we got there. After a stop to get some food and drinks in Tyndrum, we pressed on again and were tempted to stop at the Strathfillan camp site a few miles out of town. It looked like a nice site, but busy with families. We decided we really wanted to wild camp, and were well stocked with wet wipes, so we pressed on along a roller coaster of a path to reach the forest where we hoped to find a decent spot. We were all getting really tired, and it was getting quite late, so all the good places near water and where we could all fit were taken. Bet finally spotted a neat spot on a grassy ledge where we could pitch. We were grateful to stop for the day, get some food rehydrated, and get our heads down. As we retired to our tents just after nine, we heard a few drops of rain, but soon fell asleep.

### **Day3 - 23 miles approx.**

We woke around 6:30am and were soon packed up and ready for the day. The first stretch through the rest of this forest near Crianlarich was quite hilly, but it got the blood pumping soon enough. We were near to that busy A82 again, but we soon reached the Beinglas campsite in Inverarnan after eight miles, where we managed to have a pretty decent pot of coffee and some homemade biscuity cakes from the very well-stocked campsite shop. Yum. This fuelled us for the rest of the morning as we were eager to reach Loch Lomond. Finally, here it was...so beautiful under a clear blue sky. It was getting very warm again by late morning. As we passed some wild goats resting in the shade on the beach, a gentle onshore breeze brought their very strong odour up towards the footpath. Helen complained about their smell (they really did stink) but we decided they were probably not that impressed with ours! The path along the side of the loch became more of a footpath with big stones (but not the scrambling that people kept telling us we would encounter!). It was a very busy section, and quite narrow in places, so some polite stopping and passing etiquette was required. We were thankfully mostly in the shade. Our next stop for lunch was supposed to be the Inversnaid Hotel but we spotted a delightful beach a mile or two before and decided it was too good to miss! It was tempting to have a nap as it was warm. More Mediterranean than Scottish! Bet had a paddle in the loch and confirmed it was freezing, so we took her word for it, but at least it was soothing on the feet.

Then onwards, enjoying the views of the loch to our right towards the Loch Lomond Youth Hostel. As we approached, we could detect a faint smell of burning. A couple walking in the 'normal' direction told us that there was a fire in the forest around the hostel. Fortunately, it was all sorted by the time we reached it.

We entered the YHA office with no booking to camp and a desire for a hot shower. We had to wait some time as this has to be one of the busiest hostels we have ever been to. The receptionist, Nadine, was incredibly patient checking in and arranging the mealtimes, for large groups of very tired bodies. It was obvious not everyone was adept at hiking! We couldn't guess what some people are putting in their huge bags. After what felt like hours of queuing, we handed over the keys we had been guarding since the day before, against the promise we would have a spot for our tent and a hot meal. The spot for the tents was lovely, and the meal not bad. We had access to the showers but getting one to work with any force was actually quite difficult due to plumbing issues! Still, something was way better than nothing.

### **Day 4 - 17 miles**

Our shortest day to Drymen.

Once again, we awoke early to a beautiful sunny morning. We self-catered our breakfast in the hostel, washed up and got going. It was rather a nice roller coaster of a walk in the morning through the woods, but we soon felt warm again as we came along some of the lochside road sections! The views across Loch Lomond were lovely. We had one more hill to climb, before we descended into pretty Balmaha with lovely views of the loch. It was Easter Bank Holiday Monday, with summertime temperatures, so the town was quite rammed with visitors. We managed to elbow our way to a seat outside the St Mocha coffee shop with the most amazing selection of memorable cakes. Some of us managed to have seconds. Stephanie was impressed by the flushing mechanism in the toilets, which was a series of chains and pulleys, obtained from a steam train. Quite a contraption.

We tightened our belts to begin our final climb over Conic Hill. It was a proper climb and we all loved it, except for the crowds - the weather being so nice it was very busy. While the WHW does not go to the actual summit, Stephanie decided to do it.

However, she reported that the views were disappointing, far better where Bet and Helen were sat still digesting cake. If you are asked to climb right to the top of Conic Hill, and don't fancy it, you now have a good excuse. We took a break there to enjoy the last views of Loch Lomond before we made the simple journey down towards Drymen. It was a wide and open track again, devoid of trees and it got so hot! Better than driving wind and rain though. Eventually we got to Drymen and had a great meal in the Clachlan Inn, the oldest licensed pub in Scotland, to celebrate our trip. We took a bus and then a train back to Glasgow and the

sleeper home, this time horizontal in a sleeper cabin.

We have no regrets about not completing the last 10 miles of the WHW. It would have been close to a busy road again and not particularly inspiring. Having walked past Ben Nevis at the start of the route, seen so many lochs and glens on our way, we were glad to stop short in Drymen!



**Left: Keith about to finish. Right: Keith, with fellow finisher Len Fallick (Northumbria Group).**

#### **THE HADRIAN HVNDRED By Keith Warman**

Well, that was a tough Hundred, one of the most demanding I have done. It will be long remembered for the weather, which was truly appalling at times. The route over Cross Fell, at 2,930 feet and one of the highest points reached on an LDWA Hundred, was memorable and quite surreal. The long slog up from Garrigill with Angela and Tony Walton (Mid Wales Group) saw us arrive at Greg's Hut around 4:15 am on Sunday. "First light" was a bit of a misnomer. The hut was crammed sardine-like. My chums wanted to rest but I was chilling quickly and I wished to continue straight on – they were happy with that, in fact they were to catch me up at the safety check at the Silverband Mine track on the tarmac road. In driving rain, howling wind and about 25 yards' visibility, I set off alone, soon going past a group of six. The slope up to Cross Fell's summit plateau was one huge wobbling, sodden mass – the organisers had kindly put out flags and glow-sticks on canes, but you couldn't stop to try and see the next one for fear of sinking into the bog. I just set my compass and kept climbing until rockier ground was reached. But... no glow-sticks! I made the plateau and, by chance, the first of the guiding stone cairns. At the Cross Fell trig point, I caught up another group of about eight and clipped their tallies at the self-clip. With difficulty in remaining upright, I set off ahead of them on the bearing and stayed on course over Little Dun Fell, by which time the rain had helpfully become sleet. Visibility was no better at Great Dun Fell. Safely on the tarmac road, and passing the Raynet repeater station at the point where the Pennine Way goes south to Knock Fell, I got to the safety check and was treated to a bottle of Lucozade (err.....other carbonated beverages are readily available....). The geomorphological wonder of High Cup Nick was, again sadly, just a grey abyss with 30 yards visibility, and I was alone again. I had gone half a mile from Dufton when I realised I had no fluid with me, so had to return to refill my bladder. This meant that The Waltons were about ten minutes ahead of me. We re-grouped at Watersmeeting Farm, which I remembered being a checkpoint (in the same barn!) on the 1999 Durham Dales Hundred. From here, I was quite upset when Angela started having back problems, and Tony came awkwardly off a stile onto a sloping stone, slipped off and jarred his ankle. Sadly, they both decided to retire at Cowshill and I was sorry in that they had done all the hard work to get to 75 miles, but were unable to finish the last quarter of the route. I continued alone to finish at 7:47 am on Monday morning. There is so much luck in these things and I count my good fortune each year.

We had high winds until around 4am on Monday (and some violent storms during the night) although the heavy rain had stopped around 6 pm on Sunday. I was so relieved to finish but my recovery is slower than usual. These wretched things don't get any easier, but I have a sense of self pride in finishing.

My congratulations go to all Kent members who finished and commiserations to those who braved the conditions but had to retire. There is certainly no disgrace in retiring. On behalf of all entrants, I would like to thank the Kent Group members who gave up their weekends to travel the long journey north and man (with Wiltshire Group) the checkpoint at Watersmeeting Farm, Harwood-in-Teesdale, County Durham. With the incessant wind buffeting into the barn and finding its way through any available gap, they remained cheerful and gave us sustaining refreshments and encouragement to continue. Without such selfless support, there would be no Hundred and I am very grateful for their help.

#### **MY EXPERIENCE ON THE HADRIAN FORTY By Andy Clark**

Yes, I know it was the Hadrian Hundred but things didn't pan out as I'd hoped.

My preparation had all gone to plan; no injuries, plenty of miles walked and a good build-up walk over 56 miles in the Dorset Giant.

I arrived at the school for the start early as I assumed that the earlier arrivals would be able to park at the start rather than in the overflow car park a mere 200 yards away. Wrong assumption number 1! The first arrivals were directed to this car park and the school parking was only used after the overflow was full. Obviously not a problem on Saturday morning but I had visions of that 200 yards being more problematic come Monday morning.

The time before the start went quickly; plenty of people from the Kent and Essex & Herts groups to chat with, together with several other people I had met on previous walks.

A pleasant stroll down to the official start point by the bandstand in the park, with the sun breaking through. Perhaps the weather forecast of breezy with light rain at times may have been unduly negative. Wrong assumption number 2!



Off we went. A gentle introduction between the start and the first checkpoint at Newbrough Village Hall before a gradual climb across an exposed section of moorland towards Hadrian's Wall. At this stage, although the skies were darkening, the rain had not started.

Along the Wall, there were some excellent views, particularly to the north. By now the wind had got up and was blowing straight into our faces. Now I understand why many people choose to walk Hadrian's Wall Path from west to east. It is hard to imagine how the Romans or their conscripted troops endured these conditions and far worse compared with their relatively benign homelands along the Mediterranean.

For anyone who has not walked alongside the Wall before, there are very few flat sections; it is either up or down, with some very steep sections and quite a few stone steps to negotiate. I would imagine that these, while not a major issue for walkers, could be more problematic for the runners on the challenge.

Through Checkpoint 2, outside but in the slightly sheltered area of Sewingshields, but by then the rain had started. Although not particularly heavy, with the wind straight in our faces, it appeared to be.

Turning south to join the Haltwhistle Burn Path meant a welcome respite from the wind. As described on its website as '*starting from the peaty soil of the wild moor land high above the town, the water of the burn runs through the military zone of the Roman Wall, across high meadows, through a dramatic sandstone gorge and down, between lushly wooded banks, to join the waters of the River Tyne. A newly re-laid footpath beside the Burn gives access for all to this delightful walk through beautiful rural scenery*'. I fully endorse this description.

Again, such a tranquil path now, it is difficult to imagine the hustle and bustle in more recent times from the woollen mills, coal pits, quarries, lime kilns and brickworks which lined the banks of the burn.

Into Haltwhistle itself and the relative luxury of a spacious indoor checkpoint, run by the Essex & Herts Group. Although it was only 21 miles in, it does give you a boost to see and have a quick chat with people who you have regularly walked with. I'm sure I would have felt the same had I reached the Kent checkpoint at Watersmeeting.

While in the checkpoint, I decided to put on my waterproof overtrousers and, lo and behold, on leaving the checkpoint it had stopped raining. However, this was only a temporary respite.

The next section of the walk along the South Tyne Trail was relatively easy and pleasant. Nature had managed to regain control from the railway which had previously run along here. A very scenic view from the top of the Lambley Viaduct was one of the high points of my walk.

And so to Knarsdale and again an inside checkpoint. It was here that the mandatory 'kit check' took place. While it was absolutely the right place and time (Haltwhistle would have been too early and busy; Garrigill would have been too late in my opinion), it was at this kit check that I could only make any criticism of the organisation of the event. I was asked to produce the Route Description; no problem. One person later told me that they had been asked to produce a water bottle (although no check of the contents were made). My view is that this check should have been more thorough. While I am sure that the vast majority of entrants would have passed any check (it made absolute sense for your own safety to carry out the required items), bearing in mind that conditions were getting worse and in ten miles or so, entrants would be climbing England's highest peak, outside of the Lake District, AT NIGHT, I would have thought at least a check of compass, spare batteries and a survival bag would have been a minimum requirement. There was not much room in the hall and it became crowded as this was the first hot meal stop on the route. However, the two Scottish groups manning the checkpoint appeared to cope admirably.

By now the rain was back and became harder so it was now a case of full waterproofs on. Much of the next section to Garrigill was easy enough to walk as it was alongside the restored heritage railway line but it became increasingly tedious. Limited scenery, increasing gloom becoming darkness and no need to consult a route description all added to this tedium.

On arrival in Alston, it was full night time and the head torch was on. The heavens had opened and the next section was particularly challenging for me. In daylight and in fair weather, it would probably have been relatively easy but in the conditions, it was not so. The route description became sodden, glasses were rain soaked, visibility limited and the variety of stiles didn't help. One of said stiles consisted of four stone steps up to a small gate on top of the wall and steps down the other side. On a social walk, it would have probably been quite amusing to see how people approached this obstacle but by that, I could summon little humour. Again an inside checkpoint at Garrigill but by the time of my arrival shortly after midnight, it was extremely crowded and there were no seats to be had. People were, understandably, reluctant to venture out in the prevailing conditions.

The next stage to Dufton and to the next indoor checkpoint was around 15 miles, although Greg's Hut, a bothy on the way to the summit of Cross Fell, was available for some respite. The organisers' advice was crystal clear. If you had any doubts about making Dufton you should retire at Garrigill because 'evacuation' from the Cross Fell area would be very problematic.

Reluctantly, but with no real regret, I decided to follow their advice and handed in my tally card. Although I still felt fine physically, I really didn't fancy Cross Fell in those conditions. I hadn't done any serious hill walking for ages. The South Downs seem hilly to us Southerners, but Cross Fell is a whole new level above that. Having seen pictures and videos and heard tales afterwards of the conditions, I am absolutely convinced I made the right decision.

Not long after I retired, there was a minibus leaving to return to the start but I decided to stay at Garrigill for a while and get the next bus even though its departure time could not be guaranteed.

After several cups of tea and chats with other people I knew who had arrived at Garrigill after me, the hall had thinned out. Around 3am, the last walker standing left the checkpoint accompanied by the two sweepers and a scheduled Mountain Rescue member. At this stage we were told that before the next minibus could leave, there were several walkers being brought down from Greg's Hut by Mountain Rescue personnel. It later transpired that it had taken around 90 minutes in a Landrover to travel the six or so miles down the hill to Garrigill. The sight of walkers returning with foil blankets and being wrapped in quilts on arrival confirmed to me that I had definitely made the right decision.

I suspect that most of us taking part in an LDWA challenge, while fully appreciating the support and assistance of fellow volunteers at checkpoints, realistically want to be fed and watered as quickly as possible and carry on our way. It made me realise how much more there is to being involved at a checkpoint, particularly at a later stage in a challenge and in these conditions. I can't speak highly enough of the Lakeland and West Yorkshire volunteers at Garrigill. Their checkpoint was scheduled to close at

3.15 am but I later found out that they were still on duty for at least another five hours as other walkers retired at Greg's Hut and made their own way back to Garrigill later in the morning.

Having singled out these two groups, I would be fully confident that ANY of the LDWA groups would have performed just as admirably given those conditions; it just happened to be Lakeland and West Yorkshire this time around.

Given the conditions, anyone who reached Dufton has my complete admiration and for anyone who got further, together with those who actually finished the challenge, superlative adjectives fail me. Well done seems insufficient but, well done.

And so to 2020. Have I been put off? Not at all. My plan is definitely to be in Monmouthshire although I have yet to decide whether to walk. But my experience of the whole weekend was fantastic (apart from the weather) and if not walking, I intend to volunteer either for the Kent or Essex and Herts groups (possibly even both if practical). See you there.

### **LVIth of a C By Peter Jull**

Um ah, um ah, what to wear, what to carry, what to send to Dufton. Saturday's forecast was day OK, night bad but night will come before Dufton.

Wandered into town to find the shop of an acquaintance in the same trade. Wandered rather more looking for a last minute loo.

Back at the start park with four minutes spare but before I could join the crowd they were off early. Angled across to join near the front streaming out of Hexham.

Indecision had eventually decided on a rugby shirt and this was beginning to feel a hot mistake for the first leg and up to Hadrian's Wall Path (where's the wall?) But soon light rain began and T-shirters were grumbling at the chill. My attire was feeling fine, drying in the intermittences.

Hadrian's Wall is disappointing up close, much of what appears in pictures being much more modern farmer's dry stone wall. The views are fine but like the South Downs; in half an hour the view is still fine but the same view as half an hour before and the same view as will be had in half an hour's time. Followed the majority in following the less tortuous Military Road option. Others commented that they'd had enough Wall by the time the turn off was reached.

Haltwhistle Burn Path was my favourite stretch for picturesqueness. In the sports centre at the end Brian and Nick were checking off Kent Groupers as they checkpointed. The next two legs were largely cycle pathed old railway track which many disliked, but a firm footing relatively favours me and I was overtaking people. Beyond the end darkness fell and with it heavier rain. Waited too long to find a sheltered seat to don waterproofs and all those overtaken overtook while I struggled by a barn wall and crowded out Garrigill before I got there.

Eventually a seat came free and I could put on new second best leggings bought, ironically, the day before at Pity Me retail park; Mountain Warehouse didn't have their best in my size. Left with Paul McAuliffe but as soon as the serious climbing began I had to slow and sent him on ahead. New head torch had said battery life six hours. Half that and its glimmer was just enough to see my feet and little more. Extra torch was determinedly hiding in the bottom of my bag and changing batteries would have left me with no light to see to change batteries. Stumbled on taking advantage of better light as many overtook but couldn't match their pace when the gradient increased. Mountain Rescue Land Rover bounced down the track the other way and then the flashing light at Greg's Hut finally came into view and I still had more time in hand than I'd had at the bottom.

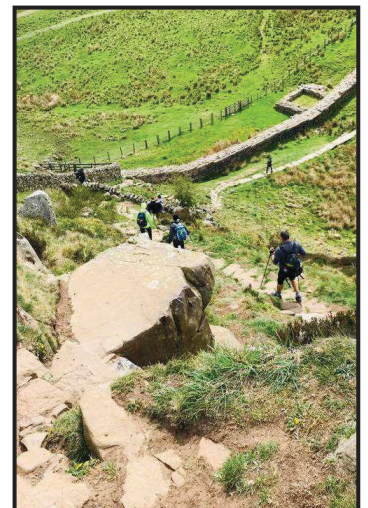
New batteries wouldn't work but second torch found. No room at the hut for a first night snooze but decided to wait for daylight before continuing. Less than an hour later and the sky was grey enough to see the low cloud fog. Marshals were still grouping walkers but mine soon left me behind until all missed the Cross Fell turning so I was in front when they returned. If there is a dry path it was no more distinct than the glo-stick and flag markers in the conditions and over ankle soggy bogs soon wetted what wasn't already wet. And then the rain really started in 40mph winds from the west.

Unlike others, I was never cold even when the water resistance of my waterproofs started to lose their capacity to resist any more water. But the climbs up to Little Dun Fell and Great Dun Fell did start my back twingeing. It went away as the road descent began but soon after the safety check cars the dreaded lean became noticeable: to the left this time instead of right as before. Unhooked a walking pole carried specially for this eventuality and carried on. If it helped it didn't stop the lean getting worse. At the bottom of the road I had to turn the route description page but even wrapped in plastic inside my waterproof jacket it had gotten soggy to the point of disintegration when touched. Remembered the detour round the back of Knock but after that followed the road signs into Dufton. In the 2½ hours it had taken to get from the safety check to the checkpoint the back pain was too much to try the Diarolyte and lie down remedy planned.

Thus ended my active participation in the Hadrian half hundred. But I am qualified to see how far I can get from Chepstow before the lean does for me again. Is there a badge for 10 non-completions?



**Two of the highlights of the route (and there were loads of those –certainly on the marshals' walk!). The first one - left - taken by David Morgan - shows High Cup Nick, which is an absolutely fantastic spot; the second one – taken by Jackie Ritchie – shows walkers coming down from Hadrian's Wall on the marshals' walk.**





## MY LAST HUNDRED By Graham Smith

My last Hundred ... OK, I've said that a few times at the end of most Hundreds I have completed. But I mean it this time. When I completed the Hadrian 100 marshals' walk on May 4-6, that was my 12th (13 if I include the Cant Canolbarth in 2007, when I retired halfway but went back the following year to finish it off – I know Keith Warman doesn't consider it an official completion, but I do!) and that's a good number to do. I proudly received my LDWA 10 Hundreds badge two years ago, and my name is on the replica trig point - donated to our group by Jane Dicker in memory of her partner Keith - of Kent LDWA members who have done 10 Hundreds.

For the last couple of years I have been a little troubled by plantar fasciitis, a constant pain on the bottom of both my feet, around the heel, and I also have an arthritic great toe joint in my left foot, which also gives me a bit of discomfort. Both issues tend to give me a bit of trouble towards the latter stages of most challenge walks, and although I take painkillers – like many of us – that doesn't entirely solve the problem. I found both issues were getting a bit troublesome towards the end of the HH marshals' walk, which helped make up my mind.

I had seriously considered making last year's Cinque Ports 100 – which I walked, largely unsupported, with Michael Headley (who decided to stop when we reached Dover) – my last, and I told my wife Sarah so. But I do like Northumberland, which has some of the most stunning, and certainly wildest, scenery in Britain. I really enjoyed the Northumberland 100 in 2006 – which was my second – and was keen to go back for the Hadrian 100.

And the HH was a fabulous walk. When I turned up at Queen Elizabeth High School in Hexham, with 33 others, I had that nervous thrill of anticipation I've always had at the start of Hundreds. The previous day I had packed my rucksack and checked and double checked that I had everything – and I checked it again before I set off for the school. And after a couple of cups of tea and a chat with a few people – we were off. And it wasn't long before we had our first climb – a nice steady one – and we were walking by Hadrian's Wall. The scenery was stunning and although there was a bit of a cold wind, I preferred that to the hot weather we had last year on the Cinque Ports 100 (on the event, on the marshals' walk and when I did it). I loved striding along by the wall with some of England's most remote and wildest countryside stretching out before me. It couldn't have been a better start to the walk (even if I did take the suggested lower route option – to avoid some of the ups and downs – at one stage), and I was quite sorry when the route turned off the wall shortly before Haltwhistle. By now most of the other walkers had gone past me, and I was walking with Peter Ford and Adrian Romain Wade, from Northumbria LDWA, and Martin Lawson, from BBN, and I stayed with them for the rest of the walk. It was very helpful walking with Peter and Adrian, because they knew the route and had recently done a recce. Also they knew the area very well, so it was also a real education.

After the Haltwhistle checkpoint – the first one in a village hall, then previous ones had been outdoors (well, it was a marshals' Hundred and arrangements can be a bit more, let's say rudimentary), we mainly followed the line of a former railway to Knarsdale and Slaggyford, shortly after which we picked up the Pennine Way, which we followed for a good 30 miles. By now it was dark, and we passed through Alston – England's highest market town – and enjoyed beers at an extra checkpoint, one of the town's pubs. Here we met Tony Murray, also from Northumbria LDWA, and pressed on to Garrigill. From here, of course, we had that long, laborious slog up to Cross Fell - at 2930 feet the summit of the Pennine Way, the highest point on the Hadrian 100 and one of the highest points on any Hundred. It was the third time I had been on that track, and it's a bit tedious at the best of times, and even more so at night, when you can't see much. But we plodded on and on, had a brief stop at Greg's Hut, and eventually got to the top. We turned off for Little Dun Fell and Great Dun Fell, dawn was just starting to break. Coming down, I slipped on a wet concrete slab and bashed my shin against a rock. I think I said "Oh my gosh!" (that might not have been exactly what I said ...). We had a pretty long march down the road before we took the paths to Dufton and the breakfast stop.

After that it was a steady climb to what for many people will have been the highlight of the whole walk – High Cup Nick, a U-shaped glaciated valley which is one of the geological wonders of the North of England. It was absolutely breathtaking. Then we plodded along the Maize Beck before leaving the Pennine Way near the Cauldron Snout waterfall. We had now done more than 60 miles and reached the stage of a Hundred where you are beginning to think you will finish. The next couple of legs saw us cross from Cumbria into Durham as we visited Teesdale and Weardale, and then another climb over grouse moors, to re-enter Northumberland. And here, as we trooped down to the checkpoint at Allenheads, we had a lovely clear evening, with fine sweeping views across to the Cheviot Hills. We had now done more than 80 miles and were pretty cream-crackered – but it was another highlight of the walk: quite magical.

The next leg, to Allendale, was almost entirely on tarmac and quite boring, particularly as by now it was dark again. But we had now done 92 miles, and we were well looked after at the checkpoint by Tony Rowley and Susan Wilkinson. After that came what for me was the worst section of the walk – crossing Greenrigg Moor in the dark. The moor went on and on and on and it was pretty boggy underfoot. I was not a happy bunny, and when I took a mis-step and splashed into yet another puddle, I think I said "Oh my gosh!" (or something like it ...) again. But we got to the last checkpoint and after having a very nice beer supplied by Dave Findel-Hawkins, we were off, passing through woods to reach the roads which we followed to the school, and the end, which we reached just before 5am, to be applauded in by Bill Milbourne, Dave Clifton and a couple of others from Northumbria LDWA.

It had been a great walk, and I will always be grateful to Peter, Adrian Tony and Martin for their company and for their fantastic help. And thanks, too, of course, to the organisers and the marshals.

So that was my last Hundred, and it was a great one to finish on. In terms of enjoyment (all right, I know the words 'enjoyment' and 'Hundred' don't always go in the same sentence) I would rate it number 2, just behind the Northumberland 100. I still plan to do 50-milers, and I certainly plan to checkpoint on Hundreds.

As I write this, I am full of great memories of my Hundreds: the wonderful, wild scenery on the Hundreds in Northumberland in 2006 and this year; completing the Wessex 100 – my main recovery target - in 2009 after a major operation for cancer; doing 105 (or was it 106?) miles on the Heart of Scotland 100 in 2010; walking over fantastic Bodmin Moor on the Camel Teign 100 in 2013; all my toes bleeding after the wet wet wet Valleys 100 in 2014; slipping over in the dark as I went down Pendle Hill in the night on the Red Rose 100 in 2015; doing the Red Rose 100 and the Dorset 100 marshals' walks with the lovely Jean Bowers, from Essex & Herts LDWA; getting quite moving welcomes from my Kent friends and colleagues at our checkpoints; the list goes on.

And then I think of my last three Hundreds, when I have struggled, and felt pretty uncomfortable at times. There is no doubt that I am now finding Hundreds a bit more difficult, and it is right to call a halt. I have made a decision, just like a made a decision to stop on the Cant Canolbarth 100 in 2007, and I am going to stick with it.

For the record, six of my Hundreds were events, another five were marshals' walks and the other was the semi-unsupported Cinque Ports 100 last year.

I will be going to South Wales next year for the Sir Fynwy 100 – but just to marshal, and that's definite.

*These photos, by Andy Clark and Dianne Marsden, were taken during the 23 mile Elham Valley Way walk on June 1, led by Graham Smith as part of the Elham Walking Festival.*

*Twenty-six people came on the walk, which started from Hythe at 8.30am. It was a hot day, but the party got to Canterbury in time for the 6.15pm bus back to Hythe – and (more importantly!) a quick drink at one of the town's Wetherspoons pubs.*





***KENT LDWA MEMBERS ON THE HADRIAN HVNDRED – REPORTS INSIDE***



***Nicola Foad picks up her lunch***



***Don Arthurs and Manfred Enger, from Sussex LDWA, checking into the South Wales checkpoint.***



***Keith Warman at the end.***



***Nicola at the end.***



***Two pictures taken from the annual Kent LDWA post-Hundred get-together, held at the Rose Crown, Wrotham, on June 11.***