

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION — Kent Group

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

NEWSLETTER



Helen Franklin and Stephanie Le Men on the morning of an overnight camp doing the pair's Across Wales Walk in August. Helen was still drinking her coffee while Stephanie was ready to go! Report and pictures inside.

Number 111



April 2020

www.ldwa.org.uk/kent

These excellent pictures were taken by Andy Clark on the Summerhouse Stroll, on February 2. Peter Jull kindly led the walk instead of Graham Smith, who had been called away to London and was unable to make it. Some of the pictures show Summerhouse Hill, or the view from it. One of the other pictures shows Saltwood Castle. The walk was hilly - and very wet underfoot!



IMPORTANT NOTICE CONCERNING CORONAVIRUS

THE statement below was issued by the LDWA's National Executive Committee on Monday March 16, in response to guidelines issued by the Government over the coronavirus crisis.

As it says, **ALL LDWA walks – challenge and social – have been cancelled.**

The NEC statement came just as this newsletter was in the final stages of being put together, so the editor has had to make some hasty re-jigs to some of the stories – including those relating to the Y 100 Sir Fynwy, which has been cancelled (as this newsletter went to press, members of the NEC were meeting to make a decision on next year's Hundred – there will be more about this in the August Strider).

The LDWA has continued to monitor Her Majesty's Government advice in relation to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Following a change to the Government advice on 16.03.20, the LDWA National Executive Committee has decided that all challenge events, social walks and other formal LDWA business organised by any of the local groups will be cancelled immediately. The ban will be reviewed by the National Executive Committee weekly or when Government advice alters and any subsequent amendments will be communicated.

The National Executive Committee understands that the decision taken to cancel all challenge events and social walks will be concerning to members. The safety of all our members, whether they are volunteer marshals or entrants and the association's ability to deliver a safe environment for all was the reason that the decision has been taken. The Government has advised that everyone should avoid non-essential travel and reduce contact with others in order to slow the spread of the virus. Walking socially would undermine the Government's advice in relation to both non-essential travel and socialisation.

As the statement above says, the ban on walks is being reviewed by the NEC weekly or when government advice alters. So, in consultation with members of the Kent LDWA committee, we are not carrying any details of Kent walks in this newsletter. The coronavirus situation is changing by the day, and Government guidelines may have changed by the time you get this newsletter, so please refer to the website for details when walks are able to re-start. The website is being updated accordingly.

This is the first time the Kent LDWA newsletter has not carried details of our walks, but we are living in unprecedented, and quite worrying, times.

We all hope that by the time the August newsletter comes out, the way we live our lives – and our walking – will have returned to something like normality.

Thank you.

Graham Smith,

Kent LDWA chairman and newsletter editor

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, Andy Clark, 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.

HUNDRED CANCELLED

JUST before this newsletter was to be printed, the Y 100 Sir Fynwy was cancelled due to coronavirus fears. It is still hoped that the Y 100 Sir Fynwy can go ahead some time, and there will be news about this in Strider.

But it is worth reporting that a total of 25 Kent LDWA members had entered the Y 100 Sir Fynwy, 24 on the event (due to take place on May 23-25), and one on the marshals' walk (due to take place on May 2-4). They are ...

Marshals' walk – Don Arthurs, plus Wendy Thurrell (former member).

Event – Tony Barter, Andrew Boulden, Jim Catchpole, John Cook, Mark Dyke, Marshall Elliott, Helen Franklin, Andrew Gordon, Cliff Gray, Jill Green, Michael Headley, Peter Jull, Stephanie Le Men, Don Newman, Jan O'Rourke, Neal O'Rourke, Judy Rickwood, Steve Russell, James Smith, Alan Stewart, Sarah Turner, Keith Warman, Keir Williams, Jessica Wright.

Twenty-five is a good number for the group. It's such a shame they will not have the chance to do the walk – this year.

Although cancelling the Hundred means Brian Buttifant has had to ditch his plans to organise a checkpoint on the event, he would still like to hear from people wishing to man our CP at next year's planned Trans-Pennine 100. Kent Group has agreed to organise a checkpoint at Hope (near Edale) at 58 miles. The checkpoint will be in a sports club.

And we have also agreed to run a checkpoint on the Elephant, Bear and Bull 100, in 2022. This will be at Tanworth-in-Arden Village Hall (at around 50 miles).

And ... we have offered to organise a checkpoint in 2023, when the Hundred returns to Scotland, with the Speyside 100. We have not yet been told where this will be, but this will be announced in due course, with details in the newsletter.



The gathering at the Kent LDWA annual Family Dinner, held on December 8 at London Beach Country Hotel, just outside Tenterden. Details of this year's Family Dinner will appear in the next newsletter.

NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS

Sevenoaks Circular

ON March 14, organisers Dave Sheldrake and Dave Thornton took the decision to cancel this year's Sevenoaks Circular, which had been scheduled for March 22. This followed worries over coronavirus and governmental advice over fears with large gatherings of people, and was clearly the correct decision. The two Daves are to be commended for taking the decision so quickly, and ensuring marshals and entrants were made aware as soon as possible. As this newsletter was being printed, a decision had yet to be taken over giving refunds to entrants. The marshals' walk took place on March 8, before the national situation changed radically.

Next year, Dave Thornton has kindly agreed to become main organiser of the event, and there are plans to change the route. More details to appear in the next newsletter.

High Weald Walk

NEIL Higham has revamped our annual Weald challenge walk for this year, with a new venue and new routes. It is due to take place on Sunday July 12, with distances of 26, 20 and 15 miles, will be based at Langton Green Village Hall, Speldhurst Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN3 0JJ. The marshals' walk is due to be on Sunday June 28.

BUT THE FUTURE OF THE EVENT THIS YEAR DEPENDS ENTIRELY ON THE NATIONAL SITUATION WITH CORONAVIRUS. For this reason Neil – who is also Kent event entries secretary – has postponed opening entries on Sientries. See the website for further details.

White Cliffs Challenge

THIS year's White Cliffs Challenge is due be held on Saturday August 29, and will again be based at St Margaret's Village Hall, and will be part of the White Cliffs Walking Festival. Planned routes are 30 and 18 miles, similar to those used last year, the longer one going over Whinless Down in Dover, one of the best viewpoints in the area.

The marshals' walk is due to be on Sunday August 16.

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TWO WALKING FESTIVALS OFF, ANOTHER MAY FOLLOW

AS this newsletter was being put together, two Kent walking festivals with which we are involved had been cancelled due to coronavirus fears, and there is a huge question mark hanging over the other one.

Elham Valley Walking Festival (scheduled for May 30-31, with Graham Smith due to lead the 23-mile Elham Valley Way on the first day) was called off on March 17. This is an annual event which is planned to go ahead again next year.

Also cancelled was the Heart of Kent Walking Festival, a new walking event scheduled for the weekend of April 25-26. The various walks on offer ranged from one mile to 22 miles – Peter Jull's HHH10 from Linton. The walks incorporate Maidstone and the surrounding areas, and it is hoped the event – and, with it, Peter's walk – can be held next year.

As the newsletter went to press, the future of the White Cliffs Walking Festival – the main walking festival in the county – was in huge doubt. The festival, due to include our White Cliffs Challenge, is due to take place between August 27-September 1. The festival's organising committee – to which Graham Smith belongs – has put all plans on hold and will not be meeting for at least three months. If the national coronavirus situation has changed for the better, with restrictions eased on public gatherings, then the

organising group will make a decision on whether the festival can go ahead, probably in a slimmed down format. There will be more news about this in the next newsletter.

OTHER NEWS - GOOD TURNOUT AT KENT AGM

WE had a total of 30 Kent LDWA members turning out for our annual general meeting, held at Harrietsham Village Hall on January 26. We were in the small hall so – as anyone who was there will recall! – the place was bursting at the seams. Michael Headley led a very pleasant seven mile walk before the meeting, and Joy Davies and Eve Richards prepared an extremely tasty two-course meal for us afterwards. And our guest speaker, Jill Green, was excellent. Jill gave us a great talk about her life in walking. She is one of only two people who have become Centurions (walking 100 miles in 24 hours) in the six different countries where Centurion events are held, and was the first woman over 65 to complete a Centurion event; she has represented Great Britain in race walking; and she has completed 27 LDWA Hundreds. She said, quite movingly, that it was walking, and the LDWA in particular, which played such an important part in helping her get life back together after husband Dave died in 2008, and when she was also recovering from cancer.

Jill's talk was followed by the usual question and answer session about Kent LDWA and national LDWA matters. Rest assured that next year, the committee will be seeking a larger venue for the meeting!

The minutes of the AGM, with the group accounts, are attached to this newsletter.

WEBSITE FUNDING

THOSE who attended our AGM in January will recall the discussion held about funding the LDWA's proposed new website. As has been detailed in Strider, and in national chairman David Morgan's regular email to members, funding the proposed new website is the MAJOR issue facing the LDWA over the next few years.

The current website, which was updated by national IT officer Adam Dawson* last year, is creaking at the seams with all the additional items it is accommodating. Last year, the LDWA website had 1.3 million visitors, with some 800,000 visits to the local group sites. Most of the website's hits are on the extensive feature on long distance paths – which are, of course, increasing all the time. Bugs on the website are being discovered every week, and it costs time and money to fix them. There is a real risk of continual glitches and breakdowns, and it is believed it will not be fit for purpose in five years time.

So we desperately need a new website, and Adam has told members of the National Executive Committee that this is likely to cost between £200,000-£300,000. The NEC is looking at various possible ways by which this huge sum can be raised, including the LDWA getting charitable status – as happens with our fellow walking organisation, The Ramblers and which could lead to significant cost savings; admin fees for non-LDWA challenge events being promoted by the LDWA; and groups contributing money themselves. One of the possible ways by which groups could do this – which several groups have already signed up to – is a 'non-member levy' on challenge events.

At the Kent AGM, members approved the principle of our group contributing to the website fund. This was discussed at the last committee meeting, in February, when it was decided not to join those groups signing up to the 'non-member levy'. Instead, we have made a one-off donation of £2,500, and we may make another donation in the autumn.

*Adam stood down as national website and internet officer at the LDWA's national AGM, being held at Easingwold, near York, on March 15. As this newsletter was printed, a replacement had yet to be found – more details should be in the next Strider.

IN THE PICTURE

KENT LDWA has five albums of photos from the group, stretching right back to our early days in the 1970s. These photo albums are always on display at our AGM and at our annual Family Dinner in December. The albums contain hundreds of photographs. Now, following a suggestion made by Michael Headley and Neal O'Rourke at our AGM in January, all these photos are going to be scanned at the Kall Kwik photo shop in Ashford, and they will go on our website, which is maintained by Michael. Hopefully they will be on the website shortly after members get this newsletter.

JIM AND SHEILA MISS OUT – BUT THE PIZZA OVEN IS READY

KENT LDWA members will be disappointed to know that the garden of Jim and Sheila Briggs did not win an award in the Society of Garden Designers Awards for 2020 (see the story in the December newsletter).

The garden of their home, in Rainham, was visited and judged by professional garden judges. Winners were announced at the society's dinner on January 31.

Says Jim: "Unfortunately our garden did not win the award, but thank you for the votes - at least we did make it to be a finalist.

"Kent LDWA members are all still welcome and I recently spent an hour splitting logs from the tree pruning to fuel the pizza oven, so we are set..."

Many thanks, Jim – we plan to do that. All we need now is for someone to lead a walk so we can visit your garden afterwards.

ANDY JOINS THE NEC

ANDY Clark, who joined the Kent LDWA committee last year, was elected to the association's National Executive Committee at the AGM in March. Andy replaces Neil Rawlins, as long distance paths officer.

This means Kent has two members on the NEC – Graham Smith, who is Strider editor, and now Andy. Congratulations and good luck in your new role, Andy – we are all sure you will do a fine job.

ECCLESBOURNE GLEN RE-OPENS – TWO YEARS TOO LATE!

MANY Kent LDWA members who were involved with the Cinque Ports 100 in 2018 will remember that, when we started planning the route, it was going to go through Ecclesbourne Glen in Hastings Country Park. But a landslip meant Ecclesbourne Glen had to be closed, so on the advice of the country park authority, we had to re-route (which, as it happened, was quite a pleasant alternative, going past a reservoir).

But Kent LDWA member Jane Dicker, who lives in Hastings, tells us that that the path running across the landslip at Ecclesbourne Glen has been re-opened, following inspections last year by Hastings Borough Council geotechnical consultants. The council says the landslip has stabilised, although monitoring of the footpath will continue.

KENT'S NAMED WALKS

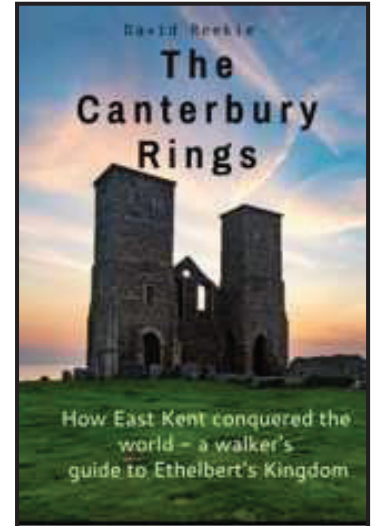
By Robert Peel (Kent Ramblers secretary and LDWA member)

Wealdway

The work planned for the weekend of January 10-13 2020, to repair the tunnel under the A21 through which the Wealdway passes near Tonbridge, was postponed and there is currently no new date for completion of the project. This is a great disappointment and a bit of a surprise as all the signs for diversion of traffic during closure of the A21 had been put in place before the postponement was announced. It is difficult to have any confidence in the promise that the work will be done at "another time early this year". Meanwhile the tunnel remains closed and the only reasonable diversion uses a short stretch of road that is considered unsafe for pedestrians by Kent County Council.

Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk

KENT Ramblers are still working on a new guide to this popular route and to other walks in Tunbridge Wells district. Progress has been delayed while we improve the waymarking of the routes and because of serious footpath obstructions both on the TWCW itself and on some of the walks near Cranbrook. Some of these have now been dealt with and we are currently in dialogue with Kent County Council about the others.



LORDS OF THE RINGS: CANTERBURY RINGS NOW OPEN TO WALKERS

By David Reekie

YES, I know what you're thinking: yet another walking route to add to the list. But this is not just an additional waymarked trail. This is a very different type of walking experience. The Canterbury Rings are a series of concentric circular walking tracks in and around Canterbury. There are four rings in all: an Inner Ring of two miles which follows the Roman and Medieval walls of the city, a ten mile Middle Ring around the edge of the city and a magnificent 20 mile Outer Ring which takes you through the lovely countryside and small towns and villages which surround Canterbury. Finally, there is an 80 mile circular route, King Ethelbert's Ring, which will take you right round East Kent and includes some of the most iconic and spectacular scenery in the South East of England. This one is a virtual trail which is not waymarked but can be downloaded from the website <http://canterburyrings.info> What makes the Rings so special? Two things: the first remarkable feature is the integration of the city and countryside. Most long-distance trails avoid towns and stay out in the countryside. This one is different. The Inner Ring is an entirely urban walk making use of city footpaths and pedestrian only routes. Much of this is away from traffic and takes you to parts of the historic city most tourists never get to see. One of the most enjoyable sections runs on top of the old Roman walls which predate the famous cathedral and have defined the shape and development of the city for 1700 years. Visitors to the city can now have a completely fresh experience of this famous place. The Middle Ring is semi urban and 90% on footpaths. Again this route will take you to many secret and little visited historic sites such as St Martin's Priory, the oldest continuously used church in England, The Norman Leper Hospital and Black Prince's well in Harbledown and the course of the first steam driven regular passenger railway in the world, the Canterbury and Whitstable railway opened in 1830.

This leads on to the second reason the Canterbury Rings are so special, the absolutely amazing history. If you love walking and are interested in history, then the Rings are the walks for you. East Kent was the origin of The Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Kent which was the earliest Anglo-Saxon kingdom and the prototype for all later Saxon states and the birthplace of England itself. Under its charismatic and brilliant King Ethelbert, it introduced Roman Christianity in AD 597 when St Augustine's Mission arrived from Rome. It went on to become the most sophisticated state in the British Isles with the first written law code which has the distinction of being the first document ever written in the English language. Ethelbert dragged England out of the dark ages and set it on the road to becoming a great European power. One of the greatest legacies of the conversion is that Canterbury remained the see (the seat) of the most powerful churchmen in England - the Archbishops of Canterbury who made the city a centre of spiritual and intellectual power unequalled in the land. The magnificent cathedral lies at the heart of Canterbury and at the centre of the Rings. The Canterbury Rings were the product of four years of hard work by a tiny three-person project group who did all the planning, fund raising, waymarking and publicity. I would like to pay tribute to my fellow committee members, Simon Cox and Ray Cordell. The project would never have happened without the support of Canterbury Ramblers, Explore Kent, Kent County Council Public Rights of Way Countryside access office, which installed the new posts and Canterbury City Council which allowed us to place stickers on their signposts. A big vote of thanks is also due to all the volunteers who helped with the waymarking in sometimes freezing winter conditions. The rings were opened in April with a series of short walks which raised money for The Pilgrims Hospice in Canterbury. A final big thank you to our sponsors: Canterbury Ramblers, Canterbury City Council, Ramblers Holidays

Charitable Trust and Sturry and Littlebourne Parish councils.

For more information of The Canterbury Rings and to download the routes, log on to our website <http://canterburyrings.info>. There is a guidebook to the Rings and the history of East Kent, available on Kindle and as an Amazon paperback. Find out who was the real-life Lord of the Rings who inspired Tolkien's work! The book's called 'The Canterbury Rings' obviously!

This article originally appeared in South East Walker, which goes out with Walk magazine to members of The Ramblers in the Kent, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Essex, Berkshire, London, Oxfordshire and Surrey areas.

REGRETS? I HAVE A FEW By Don Newman

I ENJOYED reading the reports on the Hadrian 100 in the last newsletter. At the time I was too stunned and disappointed to put my own story into print. After 33 consecutive annual Hundred completions, last year I gave up at the 55-mile breakfast checkpoint at Dufton.

After being diagnosed with a dodgy heart valve a few years ago, and being prescribed daily medication, I have got used to the fact that I've lost my former speed. I also struggle to climb steep hills. I sometimes get left behind on social walks, and have been timed out on a few events. Despite all this, I have always thought that I could never bring myself to actually retire voluntarily. At Dufton last year I did just that, cheerfully handing my card in to Michael Headley.

My demise, like that of many others, came on Cross Fell. I left the Garrigill CP in the dark, near the back of the field, and stumbled up that long rocky track. I was glad of Judy Rickwood's company for part of the way. It was daylight at Greg's Hut. A group of walkers were leaving, but they were heading back down to Garrigill, having had lengthy treatment for hypothermia. The atmosphere in the hut was subdued, and I resolved not to stop. Outside, Pat Seabrook and Kathy Tyler were being given a briefing. I'd done a recce of the route, albeit on a sunny day, felt confident, and so left them talking. I reached the summit alone, found the clipper point, and then the trouble started. Visibility in the clouds was down to a few yards. I needed a compass bearing, but the needle was oscillating wildly. I was told later that my mobile phone could have caused this. When the needle settled, I set off. If only I'd stayed for the briefing! Pat and Kathy told me later that there was one marker flag which indicated the right direction. The route description said to follow a faint path, passing small cairns. I couldn't see either, but then there was almost zero visibility. I reached the edge of the plateau, but couldn't see a way down. By now I had lost all faith in my compass, so I just spun a coin mentally, and chose left. After several hundred yards, recognising nothing and seeing no one, I turned back and walked the other way. I was soon in a mass of large slippery boulders. A twisted ankle was a distinct possibility, and I doubt if anyone would have heard my whistle. Eventually I found a path leading down, and then a glow stick. Fantastic! Then I saw two walkers coming up. They said they were doing the event, and were heading up to the clipper point. I had been walking back down towards Greg's Hut! These sensible people each had a GPS. We crossed the plateau, and descended to the flagstones. The clouds were less dense, but the cold wind and rain were relentless. At least I recognised the route now, and was soon on the steep downhill tarmac road. The wind lessened and the rain stopped. I sped downhill, slowed on the flat, and finally reached Dufton. Since leaving Garrigill, it had taken me more than eight hours, without a rest, to cover the 16 miles of the route plus my stumbling summit sojourn. I was tired, wet, cold and hungry. I have coped with worse conditions over the last 33 Hundreds, and gone on to finish, but the deciding factor now was time. I had recced most of the route, and had a realistic schedule. I was two hours behind, and needed more time to change clothes, eat, and recover. I was right at the back of the field, and was never going to make it to the finish in time.

I have always thought that when I finally gave up on a 100, it would be because a marshal would not let me continue. I also thought that I'd slink away and sulk somewhere, not wanting to talk to anyone, and that having lost my 100% record, I would never attempt another 100. All these predictions are proving untrue. John and Gail Elrick also retired at Dufton. They found us a lift for the long drive back to Hexham. Our rescuer was born in Tottenham, and like me is a Spurs fan. The two of us had a fascinating discussion on Spurs, past and present. I think I heard snoring from the back seat! Back at HQ I enjoyed the London Group (which I also belong to) hospitality and commiserations. Next morning I clapped the last finishers over the line, and shared more congratulations and tales of woe. I'm grateful to Dave Sheldrake (another Spurs fan) for driving me to my B&B. That evening, after a comfortable sleep, I enjoyed a big steak and a few beers at a window seat in a busy pub. It was still raining outside, but I felt rested, warm, and content with my decision to retire. On the train south next day, I started thinking about the 2020 Hundred. I studied my kit list, and decided on some improvements. I'll buy a GPS, and may even have learned how to use it by May this year! Those 'waterproof' gloves have got to go. A new heart valve might also be useful.

It wasn't until I got home that I realised the enormity of my decision to retire. I've always been proud, perhaps boastful, that I've never given up on a 100, or on any other LDWA event over the last 36 years. I wish that I had just tried to reach the next checkpoint, and then maybe the next, and so on, as I've always done before.

Anyway, congratulations to all those who finished, especially to the first-timers. Just think, you could be starting out on a few decades of physical and mental suffering, more than matched by huge satisfaction and sense of achievement. I hope to see you all in Chepstow this year!



Pictures from Helen and Stephanie's across Wales adventure.

ACROSS WALES WALK (AWW) – WITH A WILD CAMP WEEKEND: August 3-4 2019 By Helen Franklin

THE annual Across Wales Walk, now organised by LDWA member Stuart Lamb, has now taken place 56 times (see report in the current Strider). This 45-mile trek from the English border at Anchor to the Welsh coast at Clarach Bay takes in some stunning scenery and a mountain too. It's one of the first 'ultra-walking' events that I read about in the first copy of Strider I received when I joined the LDWA. I was intrigued to know how one could walk across Wales, and surprised that it was only around 45 miles. The AWW website shows how popular the event is - it gets booked up in early May every year.

I began to investigate the walk as a self-supported venture and asked Stephanie Le Men and Bet Benn if they wanted to do it with me. Bet had a number of events planned for the summer and so Stephanie and I decided on a date and began to plan the walk. In looking for GPX files for the route, I came across the idea of doing the AWW, over a weekend and by wild camping along the way. This means additional weight, of course, but this kind of walking training with a 10 kg bag is a great opportunity to build strength in the legs. Also, I just love to wild camp.

The planning: RD and GPX

If you do the walk you need both, plus maps and a compass, of course. We found that the RD alone was certainly not enough. Stephanie had contacted Stuart Lamb for copies of the RD and GPX which he was generous to send over almost immediately. One point about the RD - although it fits on two sides of A4, the print is quite small and not so easy to read, or am I just getting old?

Travel

We took a train to stay in Newtown the night before and stayed in an Airbnb. This was a good option and we were able to have a meal in town the night before and a good rest and breakfast in the morning which set us up for the first day perfectly. We needed to travel to the start in the morning, but it was not easy to find a cab in this town to collect us at 7am on a Saturday morning - Stephanie phoned several cab companies and was told that nothing was bookable until late morning. Luckily Ross Cabs agreed to take us...

The start

As Ross dropped us off, it was getting close to 7:30am. We took a quick selfie and headed off. The walk soon joins the Kerry Ridgeway and the morning mist was beginning to lift and we could see the lovely rolling hills here on the England/Wales border. We walked on steadily, following the RD and GPX as the route is not waymarked as such, so you need to have pretty good navigation skills. We also found that there are lots of gates and stiles to cross on the early part of the walk. It was most intriguing to Stephanie - who by default tends to be at the front opening the latch - that this part of the Kingdom has possibly the most diverse collection of gate latches she had ever seen. Some were old, some new, and some seemed to be like small mind puzzles, just to keep us on our toes!

Tea or not to tea

After about 11 miles we came to the village of Llandinam. The village hall here is a most impressive building and the hub of village life here. We had a quick look at the summer fete that was in the process of being set up inside, which included entries in flower arranging and cake baking competitions. Unfortunately, refreshments were not being served for another couple of hours and despite hints, we couldn't manage to extract a cup of tea from the community - though they usually have a pop-up coffee shop in the hall, not today. The local pub had also shut a few months before. Still, we had plenty of supplies of our own knowing the lack of provision en route. We had a snack by the river, and as we left Llandinam it was threatening to rain, but it soon stopped.

The next section was actually pretty tricky. It was necessary to use the GPS to navigate our way through a particularly overgrown area of bracken which was so dense, and this slowed us up considerably. We were also going steadily up, and the heat and humidity of the day were becoming apparent. There was also less to see, apart from fields and rolling hills in this section, which largely follows the Severn Way. If you are looking for a lonesome walk, this part of Wales is certainly a good area to consider as we probably only met a handful of people on the whole walk of two days.

The next section in the late afternoon took us off the Glyndwr's Way which we had been on for a few miles - again, good navigation was needed to stay on the route, despite being a national footpath with better signage.

Water, water everywhere

We were now on the second page of the route description, it felt like we were getting somewhere. The next section, however, had us gaining ascent again as we headed towards the Hafren Forest around 25 miles into the walk. This was a possible wild camp spot. It has a toilet block open 24 hours and I had planned that we could at least pick up our water supplies from a tap and then press on if we felt we were able. As we entered the block there was dismay, no taps and basins! We were both out of water and actually rather thirsty. The River Severn runs through the forest and we had absolutely no option but to take it from the fast-flowing river and cross our fingers. We had our camping stoves, so could boil up water when we did make camp, but until then we were fuelled by toxic water and a prayer that the water was as clean as it looked and tasted.

With our bellies empty of food and full of toxic water, we pressed on. A rather lovely walk through the forest and along the bank of the Severn - source of which is up in the mountain we were about to climb, and out the other side of the forest to our ascent of Pumlumon at around 7pm. We had to strike a compass bearing on a steady climb up a very clumpy and uneven terrain. It was beginning to get late and this section was physically hard work for tired legs. We knew that we would need to camp soon, so we carried on up as far as we could and near to the summit as possible. Fortunately, the weather was still being so very kind to us, we pitched on the plateau at SN 809875 where the RD point number 60 says to cross a boundary fence, near the 680m contour on the OS map. We pitched up, boiled our toxic water, rehydrated our food, wet wiped and got our heads down by about 10pm, which was quite late. We had 16.8 miles left to do the next day but wanted to get up early as we had a train to catch late afternoon which we could not miss!

Getting up at 6am, it was a glorious morning. A quick coffee and we broke camp, heading for the summit of Pumlumon at 752m, a gentle ascent in the morning sun. Coming off the summit, we had to take care to read the RD and use our common sense. It would be no fun in the dark/fog/mist or rain. We were soon on the track to the Nant-y-moch reservoir below and a gentle walk around it on the road to the other side. We then headed to a second small reservoir and dam, where we took the shale path down. This path was stunning, although steeply falling away to one side, we hugged the thin path through the yellow gorse and purple heather. We walked steadily through to the village of Bont-goch where we had a short break. The clouds were looking threatening again, but we

could see the coast and sea by this point, and it was getting clearer. The last eight miles or so were not really our favourite part of the weekend; essentially, we were walking along a road to get to the finish. However, even if this felt like a sting in the tail, the upside was that we came to our first shop, a Spar, at Bow Street – around 41 miles into the walk. We picked up some supplies and water and threw away the toxic stuff. We hadn't become ill from drinking it the day before but were happy to have some fresh out of a bottle.

The next stretch is another road heading for Clarach Bay which could sap the spirits of any long-distance walker. Cars driving so fast that you have to stop and lean against the hedgerow as it's somewhat narrow in places. Clarach Bay is a lovely spot geographically yet covered in holiday parks and mobile homes. We reached the promenade, and were so elated to have completed the route, yay!!!

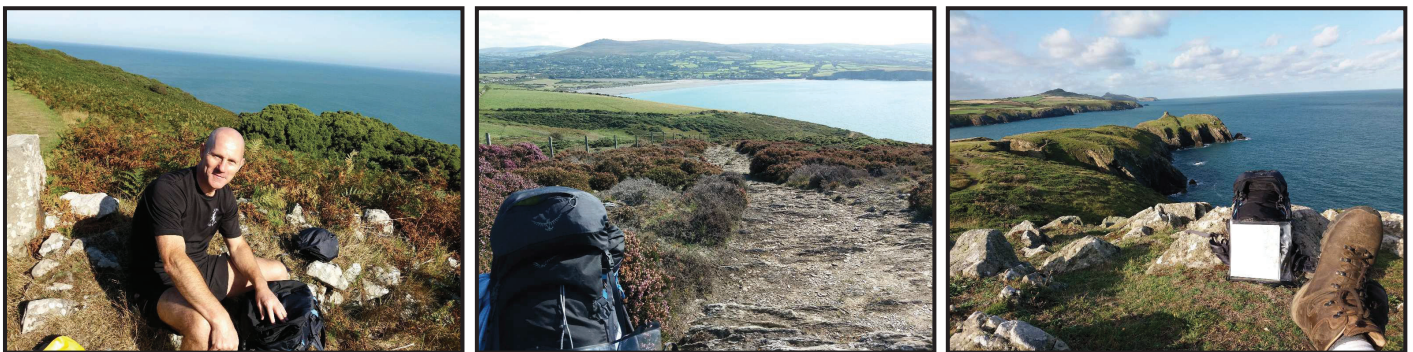
The end of the walk, or was it?

Having sat for a few minutes, I checked the trains to find the one we were supposed to catch had issues on the second leg, so we needed to hot-foot it along the coastal path to Aberystwyth to get an earlier train on a different route. This was a lovely end to the walk – shame all coastal paths aren't so well groomed!

We were able to get the earlier train, before which we grabbed a meal in the Wetherspoons which was conveniently located inside the train station. We ate as quickly as we could with an eye on the time and the platform for the train. Suddenly, with three minutes to go before the train was due to depart, we realised the train was there and had to leave in a hurry – luckily Stephanie had a bag to put the last of her lunch in! We were on the train at 3:30pm, two hours ahead of schedule, which meant that we would be back home in good time.

We thoroughly enjoyed the weekend. The Across Wales Walk is not to be underestimated in terms of ascent (6550ft) and we needed to keep an eye on the navigation and the use of a GPS was necessary at times. We were so lucky with the weather; it would have slowed us down considerably. If we did the event, having effectively recced the route and with a light backpack, we would enjoy the walk in a different way. However, from the tales and reports that I have of going over Pumlumon, I feel sure that doing the walk again would not be the same in terms of amazingly good weather for the two days.

Stephanie took the nice photos of the scenery. The other – on the cover of this newsletter – is a cheeky selfie in the morning of our overnight camp - I was still drinking my coffee, Stephanie was almost packed and ready to go! Yes, that's the morning sun on my face on the top of Pumlumon, who'd have thought it!



Pictures from David's Pembrokeshire Coast Path walk.

PEMBROKESHIRE COAST PATH : SEPTEMBER 14-23 2019

By David Thornton

APRIL and September are my favourite months in which to plan a long distance path. Not being a great lover of walking in excessive heat, these months have the potential to offer relatively mild weather and comfortable conditions. As it turns out, I might as well have done this trail in July, given the high temperatures that occurred on at least seven of the 10 days it took to complete this route. But I'm not going to complain, as I dare say that regular rain on a potentially blustery coastal path really would have been very unwelcome indeed.

Despite being 181 miles, its compact design in that bottom left hand nugget of Wales meant that just two OS Explorer maps covered the whole route, which for someone who always likes to carry these, was a right bonus. So with all planning in place, off I set with my trusty old rucksack, early on Friday September 13, by train to Victoria, then the same to Birmingham, then a three hour train journey to Aberystwyth, capped off by a two hour coastal bus journey to Cardigan, before a rather travel weary overnight stop at a simple Airbnb in Cardigan. There's a bus that can take you the three mile journey from Cardigan to Poppit Sands which is where the PCP officially starts, but it was such a wonderful Saturday morning that walking it seemed the right option.

Before leaving Cardigan I popped into a local chemist, whose staff chatted away with me for 15 minutes about the path and people they knew who had done it, followed by the local bakery, where much the same occurred. No sooner had I reached the outskirts of Cardigan than I bumped into an elderly chap who had lived in the area for 40 years and loved it, followed by a lady walking her dog who moved to the area 11 months earlier, but judging by her enthusiasm wished she too had moved here 40 years ago. By the time I eventually got to Poppit Sands I was already an hour and a half behind schedule. However, I wouldn't have swapped time for any of those chats that morning. It's these conversations with local people as much as anything that make



doing these trails such a positive experience.

The first day took me 16 miles into Newport, which was a lovely little town on that north coast section of Pembrokeshire, followed by an even shorter 14 mile stroll on day two into Fishguard, which I learned was once the main cruise shipping port for America, before P&O built and moved the Canberra to Southampton in 1961. Apart from the scenery, what took me by surprise as much as anything during the first couple of days was the number of seals and seal pups lazing around in nearly every well protected cove. While I confess the novelty of stopping to look every time I heard them wail way down below eventually wore off, it was quite a sight initially, and something I'd never seen before. I was up and away early on day three as I had a 21 mile trek into Trevine. This took me past Strumble Head lighthouse, which I'd spotted flashing away from my very first headland out of Poppit Sands on day one and some 25 miles away, which gives you an indication of the fair weather I had experienced. After a very nice overnight stay at Cranog B&B I was off on day four, another very warm day and heading towards St David's, arguably Pembrokeshire's signature town.

Invariably, on all major walks and particularly the National Trails I have done, you get the single moment that just takes your breath away and today was that day. I'd anticipated seeing something a bit special when I got to St David's Head around noon, the most westerly point in Wales, but as it happens the moment arose about half a mile prior to that as I climbed up a bit of an incline to reach a cairn. As I paused for a short breather I looked around and was just completely taken aback by the panoramic view. To my east I could once again just about make out the flash of Strumble Head Lighthouse, now 25 miles behind me, to my west I could see Ramsey Island and to my south I could see St Brides Bay in the distant background and St David's cathedral just poking out from its sunken position in the foreground. What made this all the more special is that I just wasn't expecting it.

I used my time there to reflect on a couple of people who were no longer with us. My mother's husband, David, who passed away only six weeks earlier, who loved his walking and who'd completed, along with my mum, the southern coast to coast route from Eastbourne to Weston-Super-Mare and the Thames path. Then Bob Weare from the Kent LDWA, who told me about his big plans to do all of the National Trails and more, but who sadly passed away last summer before he'd started fulfilling those adventures. Both would have loved to have been stood where I was on that day..... Eventually forcing myself to leave, I trundled off to St David's, stopping at Whitesands Bay for a spot of lunch, before a very nice overnight stay at Lawn Villa bed and breakfast.

I deliberately planned a shorter 15 miles to Broad Haven on day five, so that I could take a glimpse at St David's Cathedral. With the bright early morning sun just high enough to light up the cathedral, it really was quite a sight and well worth the late start. On my way to Broad Haven I walked through Solva and along the immense Newgale Sands before a really enjoyable overnight stay at the Anchor Guest House, with its own rather nice Italian Restaurant at the front overlooking the beach. The Anchor knocked me up a nice early breakfast so I could be on my way sharpish, as I had 18 or more likely 22 miles to do on day six, which was another very warm and picturesque day that took me through St Brides and Martin's Haven and along Marloes Sands. When you get to



Westdale Bay you can turn inland to Dale, past Dale Castle, which would have been the 18 mile option, but I'd made good time and decided to carry on around St Ann's Head. This turned out to be a good decision, as the tides would conspire against me the next day. When you reach St Ann's head and turn the corner to walk back towards Dale, you get your first glimpse of the heavily industrialised port of Milford Haven and the most almighty oil refinery. After six days of complete wilderness and tranquillity, it's like walking and heading into another world, as this refinery rises out of the earth like a giant spaceship. From afar, it's almost a thing of beauty, but I can assure you that it is anything but as you get closer, as I would do over the next couple of days.

In Dale I stayed at the very comfortable Broadside B&B. Cath, who runs this place, recommended I ate at Coco's restaurant run by the Dale Yacht Club, as opposed to the Griffin which would be the natural choice. Coco's was excellent, with a quite unusual sharing menu, which

I happily tucked into despite having no one to share with! I had Spanish meatballs accompanied by a chorizo and bean cassoulet, the latter of which I would be inclined to avoid if I ever made a return trip. Don't get me wrong, it was a gloriously rich and tasty morsel of food, but I swear I could feel 12 months being erased from my life expectancy with every mouthful. And that, after the first mouthful had been so blisteringly hot, that it stripped the roof of my mouth like a coating of industrial strength Nitromors! Day seven would either be 19 or 24 miles, depending on the tide and rather frustratingly it turned to be the longer of the two. The inland alternatives aren't the best, with a vast majority of it pounding away on tarmac, which we all dislike. The whole day lacked a picturesque theme, but the sheer scale of the industry and shipping docks made it quite interesting and varied and I quite enjoyed walking over Cleddau Bridge as I headed into Pembroke. Pembroke was a bit grim, as was my overnight stay at the Llianna Lodge. Mind you as I re-read some of the online surveys of previous occupants, whilst waiting on the street corner for the caretaker to let me in, I considered myself rather fortunate that it wasn't worse.

Day eight was a shorter 16 mile stroll for an overnight stay at the Hibernian Inn at Angle, which I was able to see clearly across the estuary from Dale, two days before. Unlike most coastal walks, where you generally have one view inland, while the other is just out to an expanse of sea, the PCP is rather different. Because the coastline comes inland so regularly, you often get good and interesting views on both sides, which I think makes for a more enjoyable walk.

My penultimate day took me 22 miles to Freshwater East, where I had a very pleasant overnight stay at East Trewent Farm. This section of the route can also vary in mileage, depending on whether the huge artillery range is being actively used. Fortunately for me it was a Sunday, so was shut, enabling me to take the PCP section through this and then along the coast which was really pleasant.

One slight downer. In the morning the path took me along Freshwater West beach and with the tide a long way out I decided to drop down and walk along it for 600 yards. No sooner had I started along the expanse of sand, I spotted a syringe. At the beginning

of 2019 I made a new year resolution to pick up a minimum of three empty cans or plastic bottles every time I go for a walk on my own, something I have actively pursued, often coming home with several more than that. Inevitably therefore, I picked up this syringe and with my senses and radar then firmly fixed on the sand, I proceeded to pick up two large handfuls of small bits of plastic along that straight line of 600 yards and deposited them in the bin located in the car park. With a mixture of anger and sadness I continued on my walk. This served as a reminder to me of how serious this issue is and what a complete mess we have made of so many things.

The weather turned in a major way on my last day, from Freshwater East to Amroth Castle, with an estimated nine days worth of rain cascading down along with a hefty wind to boot. However, after nine sunny and warm days, ironically it came as a bit of relief and I rather enjoyed it. The route took me 18 miles through Tenby and also Saundersfoot, which I really liked the look of. Because of the knowledge of the bad weather forecast, I left East Trewant really early and ended up at Amroth Castle well ahead of schedule. I'd just missed the 2.15 bus to Kilgetty and with the next one not due until 4.50, I decided, despite the rain, to walk the five miles, negotiating my way around the local footpaths. After a very comfortable Airbnb overnight stay just down the road from the railway station, I caught the early train from Kilgetty to Swansea, then on to Paddington and eventually arriving in West Malling mid afternoon.

I thought the PCP was a wonderful walk, no doubt made all the more enjoyable by the fair weather I experienced. However, despite being 181 miles long and with more than 31,000 feet of ascent, both statistics surprisingly more than Offa's Dyke which goes from south to north Wales, I just didn't feel the same sense of achievement I'd felt on completion of other trails. I can only put this down to the fact that despite its length, it's only just over 20 miles as the crow flies from Cardigan to Amroth Castle and when you look at that on the map it just doesn't do the trail justice. Since returning I've had a number of friends ask me whether it's as good an area as people say for a summer holiday. My response has been to imagine it's equally as stunning as the UK's most popular holiday destination of Cornwall, but without the overcrowding. On that basis I'm guessing a few might be booking up to go there next year.



The party, with Meg, Marshall's border collie, about to set off from Kearsney Abbey.

HHH 2.5&3: November 24 By Peter Jull

SIXTEEN favoured East Kent mud over Gatliff mud but had trouble with trees with many recent fallers from the Kearsney Abbey start through Frandham Wood. St. Radigund's Abbey ruins were new to many before down to use a new footpath section at Poulton and up to West Hougham (maybe CP2 on a Hellfire Hundred). Down into Alkham and up with views over left shoulders to admire before the herd of yapping dachshunds that live in the house at the top. Crossing the last big arable by zigzag sticking to the PRoW seemed masochistic when it was fallow and could have been shortcutted.

Through Wootton, and Denton's Jackdaw lunch stop was soon in sight below. A party of 20 pipped us to the queue so the picnickers in the bus shelter fared better. A loop past the village hall (maybe CP3?) up and down and it was time to turn for home. On to Lydden, then one more down and up to take advantage of a new permissive path into the back of Bushy Rough House, but the light was fading too fast to see the lakes at their best. Eighteen miles in 7½ hours with two newbies keeping up better than some stalwarts.



Two highlights of the walk -

Don on the summit of Blackcap early in the morning, and the great view from the top of Firle Beacon.

A WINTER STRIDE IN SUSSEX: December 7-8 By Graham Smith

I AM sure that most Kent LDWA members have heard me say that the Sussex Stride is my favourite event. I never tire of those lovely South Downs, with their friendly, rolling contours and closely cropped grass which often feels like you are walking on a green carpet.

I first completed the Stride in 1999, and one of the reasons I have always had a soft spot for it was it was the second time I had ever walked through a night but the first time I had actually enjoyed a night walk. My first night walk was the White Cliffs Challenge - at 100k, a forerunner of the 50-mile White Cliffs Challenge we have staged since 2005. I remember getting horribly lost in some woods near Chartham, and swore (literally!) I would not do another night walk. Two years later, Mike Pursey advised me to enter the 50-mile Sussex Stride, which then took place over the August bank holiday. I walked it with Joy Davies, and I loved it. The stars and the moon were out when it got dark, and the moonlight somehow seemed to be reflected off the chalk on which we were walking.

I entered the Stride every year after that, and was very disappointed when Sussex LDWA decided to cancel the event in 2005, due to poor numbers. Shortly after that, members of Kent, Sussex and Surrey LDWAs got together to plan and launch the KSS (Kent Surrey Sussex) Triple Challenge of 50-mile walks to be completed in successive years – our White Cliffs Challenge, the Surrey Tops and the Sussex Stride. Thus, the Sussex Stride made a very welcome return to the LDWA's calendar in 2010 and, as with the WCC and the ST, is held once every three years.

I seem to recall I completed the Sussex Stride marshals' walk once, but I have done the walk two or three times solo, either in preparation for the annual Hundred, as I found it an ideal training walk, or because there may have been a clash with something else. And I was really looking forward to the marshals' walk last year, which was held over the weekend of August 31-September 1. Unfortunately I managed to do some damage to my knee on the Dorset Duddle on August 18, which meant I had to pull out of the Stride marshals' walk (although I marshalled on the event, held on September 21-22, with several other Kent LDWA members, of course).

I still wanted to do the Stride, but the knee was taking a bit longer to recover than I had hoped, so that – plus my various other commitments – meant a 51-mile walk could not be done in October and most of November. Eventually, with the knee just about recovered, I decided on the Friday-Saturday of November 29-30. I asked Don Arthurs if he might be interested in joining me, as he has completed some walks of huge mileages (including two Hundreds) these last three years, and he agreed. But when we realised the weather forecast for that weekend was for rain and wind, we decided to postpone the walk for a week, as the forecast for the following weekend was much better.

So, at 8pm on Friday December 7, I picked Don up from near his home in Ashford and we drove to East Dean (the event actually starts at Rottingdean, just outside Brighton, but East Dean is the nearest point on the route to Kent) and set off, with our torches on and route descriptions in our hands, at 9.40pm. It wasn't too cold, the moon and stars were out (much like when I first did the walk 20 years before) – and it was dry.

We followed the route to the hamlet of Crowlink before taking a nice path through a valley to the cliffs – and four of the Seven Sisters. We then dropped down to the Cuckmere Valley and followed the South Downs Way route up the hillside and down to the hamlet of Litlington, where we had a quick stop. We then followed the River Cuckmere for a short while before turning off at the bridge used on the Good Friday South Downs Loop (26-milers turn left, 20-milers go straight on). We took the Good Friday 26-mile route up the hillside to cross the road and take a low path, which was pretty muddy, to Norton, giving us nice views of the lights of Newhaven to the left. We then took a good, gradually rising path which eventually led us onto the South Downs ridge, which we followed for a short while before dropping down to Southease, crossing the railway line and the River Ouse. By now we had walked 16.4 miles, and of course we had not slept, so we were starting to feel a bit tired. Fortunately the door of Southease church was open, so we were able to have a sit-down in the porch.

From there we were shortly able to return to the South Downs Way, with fine views over to Lewes. We then followed good, reasonably dry tracks to a minor road which took us to the main road at Rottingdean, where we turned right to walk past Longhill School, where the Sussex Stride is always based.

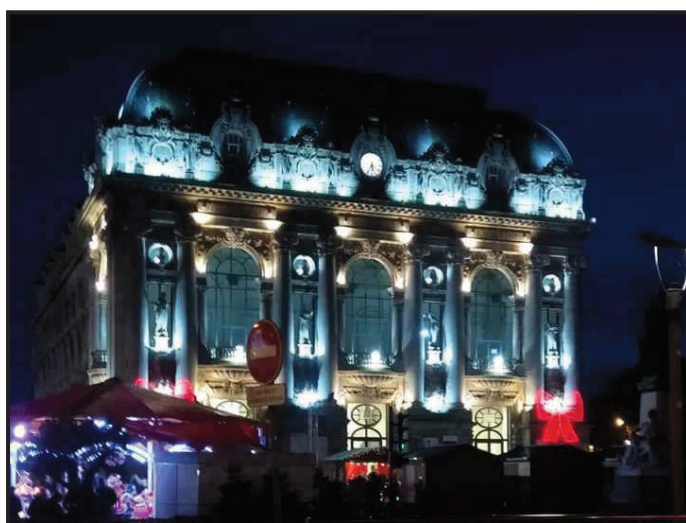
By now we had done 23.2 miles, and it was about 5am. After a brief stop, we pressed on, soon getting up onto a nice path above Rottingdean, before crossing the main road and rejoining the South Downs on some good, long, clear tracks where we picked up

the SDW. It was getting light as we crossed the A27 and took an uphill path, meeting some early morning joggers. We were now on another good path which gradually wound uphill until we turned off the SDW to walk past Blackcap, a fine 676ft hill offering marvellous views, and in my opinion one of the two highlights of the walk. By now it was 8.30am and we dropped down to Offham, where we had stop in a bus shelter. We had done 33.3 miles.

The next stretch brought us to the delightful town of Lewes, and the route follows the River Ouse before climbing up to the golf course to take a nice path which drops down to a valley and goes up past Mount Caburn (a fine viewpoint which I usually visit on my Lewes Loop walk – but not for Don and I that day!) The route goes down to Glynde, before crossing the busy A27 again to visit Firle. It was now just about noon, we had done almost 40 miles and here we were met by Dave and Jane Giles, Sussex LDWA members who live in East Dean, who very kindly provided us with much-needed and very welcome refreshments. It was great to see them.

After that we went through Firle for the steepest climb of the walk, leading up to the South Downs ridge but which takes you to (in my view) the other highlight of the walk: Firle Beacon, 712ft and which is always visited on the Good Friday South Downs Loop. On this day the views were fabulous, and it was great to walk on the springy turf. We dropped down to Alfriston and had a nice stop at the George Inn, having done 44.7 miles. Just as we set off, we met Anthony Mitchell, from Sussex LDWA, who was walking out the route of the group's South Downs Marathon, which starts and finishes in East Dean.

We then crossed fields and had that long, laborious (but not too steep) climb back onto the South Downs, before more good, clear paths to drop down to Jevington (no stop at the Eight Bells this time) and the last climb back to the ridge again, to turn off the South Downs Way to follow a fine path for the last two miles back to East Dean, arriving just after 5pm and in the dark, of course. We had walked 51 miles and had done a total 7677 feet of ascent, and it was actually the first time I had ever done a 50-miler in winter conditions. And although we walked most of it in the dark, the route description was spot on so we had very few navigation issues. So thanks for giving us a fine route, Sussex LDWA, and particular thanks to Dave and Jane for meeting us at Firle.



Left: the Kent party by the sand dunes near Coquelles. Right: the Calais Christmas lights.

See back page and inside back page for more pictures from the trip.

CHRISTMAS CRUISE AROUND CALAIS: December 14 By Graham Smith

AS Sarah Turner usually says, our walk in France, whether it be the summer one or the December one, never disappoints. I have been putting on French walks for more than 25 years now, and the December one began as a winter version of the summer walk, but over the years it certainly appears to have developed a popularity of its own.

Of course, doing a walk using cross-Channel ferries means you are always running the risk of bad weather causing delays, which is what happened on December 14. Originally the whole trip was geared to getting the 0925 ferry out of Dover, but two weeks before departure, we were informed that P&O had changed the time to 0955. In the days leading up to the trip, there were exceptionally fierce winds blowing across the Channel, which disrupted the ferries, and on the day before we sailed, we were informed the departure time had been changed to 1030. So the nine of us who had booked turned up at the P&O departure hall, to be informed the time had been put back again – to 1115. Well, we were committed to the walk, so it was just decided to shorten it from the planned 15-16 miles and not go out to Cap Blanc Nez, where we usually go, due to the time, as we were booked on the 2055 ferry back. After discussing various options, we decided to make the walk a much shorter circular one from Calais.

So we got on the ferry, and had a very nice breakfast – which, by that time, was really brunch, for a pretty choppy crossing (although it was certainly not the choppiest we have ever had on this venture). Arriving at the docks, we got the bus to the port entrance, and began walking immediately. We took a route out to the coast never taken before on this walk, going past the fortification of Fort Risban and then turning left along the promenade. Here the strong wind was blowing sand from the beach into our faces, so instead of following the beach, we took the road through Bleriot Plage – and soon passed a memorial to Louis Bleriot, who in 1909 became the first person to fly across the Channel. The memorial is close to the spot where he actually set off, and – as many Kent LDWA members (including those who got past 74 miles on the Cinque Ports 100) will be aware – there is another memorial, just outside Dover, marking the spot where the French aviator landed. Our route then took us along roads, turning inland for the Auchan hypermarket, where we did some shopping and had a drink. As it was now almost dark, we set off along the road back into Calais to see the town's Christmas lights – and we were not disappointed. The lights were as spectacular as always, particularly the displays over the opera house and the multi-coloured one over the town hall. It was very impressive, and we were even more impressed when a convoy of Santas roared by on motorbikes, obviously taking part in a Christmas festival.

After a very pleasant meal at the Au Dieux Forneau restaurant, we walked to the port for the ferry back. We found that the high

winds were still delaying the ferries, and the time of the one we had booked on had been put back – but a VERY helpful lady at the P&O check-in desk pulled out all the stops to get us all on the previous ferry, whose time had been put back to the time of the one we had originally booked on, using her influence to get us past passport and border control in double quick time. So we got back at, more or less, the time we had planned to.



Pictures from the New Year's Day walk. More pictures are on the inside front cover.

NEW YEAR IN SUSSEX: January 1 By Graham Smith

FOURTEEN LDWA members, including a couple of friends from Sussex, turned up at Rye railway station at 9am for what has become an annual Kent foray into our neighbouring county on New Year's Day.

And if anyone had been nursing a hangover, it certainly didn't show, although Eve Richards had been celebrating at a friend's house in Walmer until 3am and Dianne Marsden and Sarah Turner had been seeing the new year in at Lydd, and just about made it to Rye for the 9am start.

So we set off, and the route initially took us along the Royal Military Canal, going past Camber Castle, followed by a bit of road walking which took us right to the coast, and path by the shore which went past some lakes full of birdlife to Pett Level (where, people may remember), we had the first checkpoint on the Cinque Ports 100 in 2018. There are toilets here, so after a quick stop, we moved on to take the CP100 route in reverse, going up to Fairlight and then entering Hastings Country Park, where three short but sharp climbs seemed to get rid of any hangovers.

I had decided that the route would not visit Hastings, as conditions underfoot on the route's walkout were very wet. Instead we turned right to Barley Lane and had our first lunch stop at a picnic spot. We then took part of the 1066 Country Trail, which followed a pleasant undulating course offering fine views, before going through a wood to the road, which we followed to our second lunch stop: The Royal Oak at Pett. This was very good find – a very walker friendly pub which offered good food and beer. I had rung beforehand, and a table had been provided for us.

We stayed there for a good 40 minutes, before moving on taking a minor road and a pretty wet path before a short rise to drop down and turn right to go past some lakes, and then a short section of the Royal Military Canal. After a short distance we turned off to go to Winchelsea, where we picked up the CP100 route. After a photocall at the trig point just outside the village – a spot offering some of the finest views on the entire CP100 route – we followed the CP100 route to the main A259 road and then paths crossing fields back to Rye. We arrived just before 5pm so we had made very good time, and only had to use torches for the last 15 minutes.



Left: Cadair Idris – almost at the top. Right: cricket at Colwyn Bay.

(NO) VIEWS FROM CADAIR IDRIS By Neil Higham

AS many will know, Cadair Idris, just south of Dolgellau, is a spectacular Welsh mountain, Snowdon's geological twin in South Snowdonia, and one of Wales' most popular peaks. At a height of just under 3,000 feet, it is well worth the effort, and the views from the summit, Penygadair, are known to be awesome – or so say all guide books etc. For the time being, I can only take this on trust.

There are three recognised starting points for an ascent; one on the southern side and two on the northern. The southern start lends itself to a 'circular', incorporating the main tourist ascent of the Minffordd Path, "a varied route with prolonged interest". But I spotted another suitable southern starting point, in Abergynolwyn, some distance away

August 2015 – I drove up to North Wales with a plan to do a figure of eight, utilising four routes for two ascents. Feeling tired after crossing the border, I turned into a quiet lane and settled down to sleep in the car overnight, only to be rudely awakened in the very early hours by a couple of Wales' finest. "Does anybody know that you are here, Sir?" Answer "Nope, not even me – but I do have a map here if *you* need any help" I explained that I wanted to make an early start on Cadair Idris and that I had accommodation booked for the following night; duly satisfied, they continued on their way.

Dawn broke and I still had some miles to go, but eventually parked up at the Ty-nant car park. At 08:00, later than envisaged (but still early for me!), I walked 900 yards along the minor road to commence my first ascent, the Fox's Path (Path A). This eventually comes to a lake (Llyn y Gadair) and then there is quite a scramble up a 1,000 foot scree slope (not recommended for descents). The summit was shrouded in cloud, but I noted the hut just below the summit and, all too briefly, saw the latter part of the ascent that I hoped to do later that day; but no views. Then began the seven mile trudge down to the village of Abergynolwyn (Path B) – and, in the heavy drizzle, it was a fairly unremarkable walk down, briefly enlivened in the foothills by information about the legend of a young lady from Llanfihangel-y-Pennant, who had walked 25 miles to Bala in order to buy a Bible.

I arrived in Abergynolwyn some 30 minutes after the only bus of the day towards Minffordd had departed. Bother! Sat in a café for 40 minutes or so, drinking copious amounts of some very welcome tea, wondering whether to abort or carry on. Being a bit of a Scrooge, a taxi for the 15 miles (minimum) back to the car was surely out of the question – even if one could have been sourced. So I girded my loins (or similar) and took to the Minffordd road for 2½ miles, before proceeding past a forest and down minor lanes, with Tal-y-llyn Lake on my right. It was persisting quite heavily by the time I reached Minffordd. Dilemma, what do I do now?

No dilemma! At around 16:00, I started up the Minffordd Path, Path C, past the waterfalls, meeting a number of people descending – and the rain, which had briefly relented, became steadily heavier. I viewed Llyn Cau and the point of no return (the only taxi from here would be a flying one!), and climbed up onto what I understood to be a "rollercoaster ridgeline" (not that I could actually see anything). Never having been here, I was to a certain extent walking 'blind', although I was fully aware that, for the unwary, there was a fairly dramatic and very dangerous edge on my right side.

I continued battling the elements, following what I hoped was the correct path, occasionally looking at the map, my compass and some instructions; reached a stile, omens good. Even better, the stile displayed its **OWN** grid reference and, glory be, the map confirmed that I was on the right track!

Naturally, as it was August, I was in shorts, and had not donned my cagoule, not wanting it to get wet, my polar fleece doing a grand job. In truth, though, with the wind howling and rain horizontal, I was a complete and utter idiot to be up there alone – without anybody knowing where I was.

Down the path went (a bit of a surprise, this) and then up again heading, um, er, somewhere, following a few cairns, or what looked like cairns, with the occasional brief glimpse of Llyn Cau far below. Perhaps more by luck than judgement, I reached the summit, and took five minutes in the aforementioned shelter to have some staple diet (a Mars Bar, or two); however, no liquid required, I had been provided with a plentiful supply in the past hour, thank you very much!

Three parts done, just Path D to negotiate. This involved a repetition of the Path B descent (do keep up!) for the first 1.4 miles, and then down the Pony Path (easier, but longer, than Paths A and C), leading directly to the car park. By now it was beginning to get very gloomy, but I made it safely down in reasonable time. Approximately 20 miles for the day. And onwards for a late arrival in Carnarvon.

A fallow day followed, but Snowdon – via Crib Goch and Crib Y Ddysgl, and then onto Y Lliwedd and the remainder of the 7½ mile (Snowdon) panorama walk – called the very next day, at a gentle pace.

Fast forward four years to

August 2019 – Cricket: Lancashire were playing Glamorgan away, at Colwyn Bay in a four day game, so an ideal opportunity to combine pleasures. Drove up from Oxted early doors on the Sunday – lucky I had a collapsible chair with me, as the cricket ground was jam-packed; I soon realised that this was more akin to a home game for Lancashire with Manchester being just 75 miles away, yet 180+ miles from Cardiff. Good day's play (Lancashire on top, naturally).

Slept in the car that night close to Minffordd – no enquiring policemen this time – and set off up Path C in the early morning.

Realised that I have slowed a bit of late – I never was a 'speed king', though two sub 36 hour hundreds (in the early 17th century, I recall) attest to what once was – and, after Llyn Cau, I was overtaken by a party of four, then by a lone walker. Once I had attained the main ridge, the weather closed in and I was again following the track without seeing any views. Well before I reached the (grid referenced) stile, the party of four passed me going back to the car park – they had had enough. And then the lone walker also appeared, having turned around at said stile. I explained that I had done the route to the top before (although admitted that I didn't have a clue how), so he – Charl – gamely decided to tag along. Well, we got to the summit, took shelter in the hut for a short while and then, after very briefly visiting Mynydd Moel (so my instructions say!), descended on Path C(ii) – i.e. the remainder of the circular route – which eventually rewarded us with some good views as we approached the foothills, while the almost vertical path by the fence gave my knees a right bashing. Incidentally Charl, from South Africa, said that he lived near Gatwick, but this turned out to be Redhill – and, spookily, he was a member of the Oxted Cycling Club, not that I know any of them. We had a good old natter about the Surrey hills and local issues, plus Table Mountain and Cape Town, etc.

Said goodbye to Charl, had a welcome pot of tea and some chocolate cake at the café and contemplated what came next. I reasoned that it would be too late to see any decent amount of cricket, so I meandered to the coast and eventually round to the Ty-nant car

park I had used in 2015. Cadair Idris was slightly covered in cloud, but, just maybe, it might clear. So I ascended the Pony Path (Path D) and plodded on, but slower now as I could see malevolent black clouds rolling in from the south west; realising that I wasn't going to see anything at all that evening, I turned back some 700 yards from the summit.

So that was probably 85% of an ascent; or 1.85 ascents for the day, with **NO** views from the top. To make matters infinitely worse, I later found out that Dane Vilas, Lancashire's captain, had leathered the Glamorgan attack for 266 runs – the 2019 season's highest score – and I'd missed it all!

Tuesday was scheduled for cricket again – another bumper crowd. Watched in the sunshine as Lancashire turned the screw, but I left just before the finish to get to Penrhyn Quarry, and what is billed as 'the fastest zip line in the world and the longest in Europe' - almost a mile! Yikes! An experience, certainly, but not for the faint-hearted. Two hours total - but the real action was over all too quickly (and I have a video to prove it). The belching trucks taking us steeply up to the 'launch' site at the top of the quarry would definitely not have met with Greta Thunberg's approval.

Wednesday - cricket had finished a day early, so what to do? Good guess! I drove down to Dolgellau again and on to the same Tynant car park. Checked the top of Cadair, covered in cloud as expected. Hmm. Well, I had a bit of time on my hands, so I resolved to get to the summit (using the Pony Path) and, if no views, I would be prepared to wait in the shelter for two hours. And that, gentle folks, is what happened, as perhaps some 20 people who ate their lunch in 'my' shelter could confirm as we swapped stories – but unfortunately the weather did not relent and, after sticking it out for a full two hours, I reluctantly accepted reality and descended, 'bloodied but unbowed'.

So, it's now 4.85 ascents of Cadair Idris and I am yet to see the views from the top!

Why the fascination with Cadair Idris, you may well ask? Some 15 or so years ago, we holidayed in a cottage on the Mawddach estuary, 'directly' below, but - as the children were young - I didn't get an opportunity then to 'do' the ascent; I resolved to come back before legs and knees finally pack up.

Accordingly, this mountain is still, for me, "unfinished business". I am determined and **will** be back. And a warning: if you are ever on this beautiful mountain, in less than perfect conditions, and you hear a harrowed wailing and a gnashing of teeth, look out for me, bemoaning yet another ultimately unsuccessful attempt to see the views from the summit!

FAMILIAR NAME ... this picture of Elida Barnett, Peter and Pauline Barnett's daughter-in-law, was sent to the newsletter editor by Brian Buttifant. Elida is married to Peter and Pauline's son Chris, and the pair now live most of the year in Spain. Elida is wearing one the group's first sweatshirts. Peter – a Kent LDWA legend who completed 12 Hundreds - died in 1999, while Pauline – a dedicated Kent LDWA member since the early 1980s - died in 2018.

COMEDY CORNER By Bryan Clarke

The items below are taken from Fault Sheets which are filled in by pilots when they finish a flight and handed to the ground engineering crews. The pilot writes in the fault and the engineer records the solution.

P is pilot and E is engineer.

P. Left inside main tyre almost needs replacing.

E. Almost replaced left inside tyre.

P. Test flight OK except auto-land extremely rough.

E. Auto-land not installed on this aircraft.

P. Something loose in cockpit.

E. Something tightened in cockpit.

P. Auto-pilot in altitude hold mode produces a 200 metre per minute descent.

E. Cannot reproduce problem on ground.

P. Evidence of leak on right landing gear.

E. Evidence removed.

P. Radio volume unbelievably loud.

E. Radio volume set to more believable level.

P. Suspected crack in windshield.

E. Suspect you are right.

P. Air Con inoperative.

E. Air Con always inoperative in off mode.

P. Number 3 engine missing.

E. Engine found after brief search.

P. Aircraft handles funny.

E. Aircraft warned to fly correctly and be serious.

P. Target radar hums.

E. Reprogrammed target radar with lyrics.

P. Mouse in cockpit.

E. Cat installed.

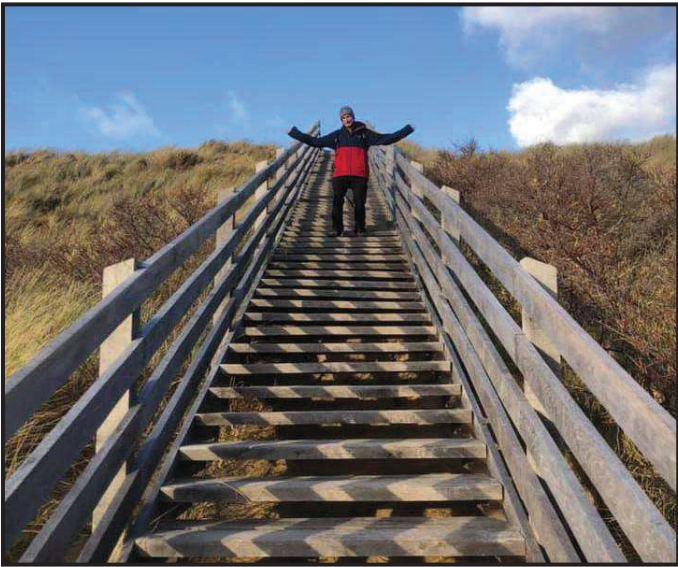
P. Noise coming from under instrument panel. Sounds like a midget pounding on something with a hammer.

E. Took hammer away from midget.



These pictures were taken by Sarah Turner and Jessica Wright on the Christmas Cruise Around Calais on December 14. Report and more pictures inside.





Kent Group AGM
Harrietsham Village Hall
26/01/2020

Attendees:

Jenny Austin, Mike Attewell, Trevor Blake, Duncan Brice, Jim Briggs, Brian Buttifant, Jim Catchpole, Andy Clark, Bryan Clarke, Joy Davies, Jane Dicker, Nick Dockree, Helen Franklin, Shirle Gill, John Gilbert, Jill Green, Michael Headley, Neil Higham, Peter Jull, Dale Moorhouse, Jan and Neal O'Rourke, Mike Pursey, Eve Richards, Steve Russell, Dave Sheldrake, Graham Smith, David Thornton, Keith Warman, Cathy Waters.

Apologies:

Don Arthurs, Stephanie Le Men, Avril Stapleton, Sarah Turner.

The AGM started at 2.15pm.

Graham Smith started the meeting by thanking Joy Davies and Eve Richards for preparing a very nice pre-meeting meal, and thanking Michael Headley for leading a very pleasant pre-meeting walk. He pointed out that the group's trig trophy – bearing the names of Kent LDWA members who have completed 10 Hundreds, and donated by Kent member Jane Dicker in memory of her late partner Keith – was on display.

Minutes of the 2019 AGM: these had been distributed with the April 2019 newsletter.

Guest speaker:

Jill Green, a Kent LDWA member, gave us a very entertaining talk about her life in walking. Jill is one of only two people who have become Centurions in the six different countries where the events are held, and was the first woman over 65 to complete a Centurion event; she has represented Great Britain in race walking; and she has completed 27 LDWA Hundreds. She said, quite movingly, that it was walking, and the LDWA in particular, which played such an important part in helping her get life back together after husband Dave died in 2008, when she was also recovering from cancer. Jill received a warm vote of thanks for her excellent talk.

Chairman's report:

Graham reported that 2019 had been a busy year, although not as busy as 2018! We had organised three very good events; we organised checkpoints on Hadrian's Wall at Watermeeting Farm, and on the Sussex Stride; there was another name – Wendy Thurrell – on the trig trophy with the names inscribed of Kent LDWA members who had completed ten Hundreds; and we were getting good numbers on our social walks, with more walks with our neighbouring groups.

Looking ahead, we had three more events this year, we were getting involved with the walking festivals in Kent (in Elham, the White Cliffs, and a new Heart of Kent one), which helps raise our profile; and Neil Higham is revamping our annual Weald challenge walk.

In 2022, one of our contributions to the LDWA's 50th anniversary is a special KSS (Kent Surrey Sussex) Triple Challenge of three 50km walks in successive weeks: the White Cliffs Challenge, the Surrey Tops and the Sussex Stride.

Graham said that what had given him most pleasure was seeing people get involved with the group and making important contributions. He made special mention of Dale Moorhouse who, although having one or two health issues which currently limit his participation on group walks, was one of our keenest members, and always one of the first to volunteer for checkpoint duty.

Treasurer's report:

The group accounts are attached to the back of these minutes.

Peter reported we had £6,500 in reserves.

Secretary's report:

Stephanie was unwell and could not attend, so her report was read out by Graham.

Main points:

The main subject of the local groups' meeting in November was the IT website financing – see AOB below. Other topics were publicity and marketing; walk registers – strongly recommended on social walks; issues with Strider deadlines for social walks listings, which the Strider editor is addressing; Project 50 for 50 years of the LDWA – several ideas, including each group holding an anniversary walk on the same weekend, and a special Strider.

Her report also said there will be a different location for the next Kent AGM!

Election of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer:

Graham Smith was re-elected chairman; Stephanie Le Men was re-elected secretary; Peter Jull was re-elected treasurer. Proposed: Eve Richards. Seconded: Dale Moorhouse. Approved unanimously.

Election of committee members:

Don Arthurs, Brian Buttifant, Andy Clark, Joy Davies, Nick Dockree, Helen Franklin, Neil Higham and David Thornton were re-elected. Proposed: Keith Warman. Seconded: Dale Moorhouse. Approved unanimously.

Challenge walks:

Sevenoaks Circular. David Thornton reported this year's event would be in the same venue, with the same routes. He said the routes would probably change next year.

High Weald Walk. Neil Higham reported this year's Weald challenge walk would be on July 12, starting from Langton Green.

White Cliffs Challenge. Graham reported this would be on August 29, as part of the White Cliffs Walking Festival as usual. The marshals' walk would be on August 15.

Social walks:

Peter mentioned more walks were needed for August-September period this year.

Future Hundreds:

Brian Buttifant appealed for more help with the Kent checkpoint on this year's Hundred. He also mentioned that the group had been allocated indoor checkpoints in 2021 and 2022.

Graham told the meeting that Peter had an idea for Kent LDWA to host a Hellfire Hundred in 2024. This had been discussed at committee, with mixed views. Peter explained his idea to the meeting. Graham said that people were needed to join an organising group, and members were asked to consider contacting Peter before the next committee meeting, on February 20, if they were interested in helping.

Any Other Business;

Website. Graham reported that the main issue facing the LDWA currently was funding the new website, as the current one was likely to be not fit for purpose in five years time. This was likely to cost between £200,000-£300,000. The LDWA NEC was looking at various ways of fundraising and cost-saving to raise the money. Groups were being asked to raise money themselves, with various groups having signed up to a 'non-member levy' on challenge events. The meeting held an interesting discussion on the subject, with general agreement that the group should help raise the money. Ways of doing this would be discussed at the next committee meeting.

Photo albums. Neal O'Rourke said that the group had five photo albums of pictures stretching back to the group's early days, and he and Michael Headley had identified a shop in Ashford which could scan in all these pictures for a cost of £250-£300, so they could go onto our website. It was agreed this was an excellent idea, which would be discussed at our next committee meeting.

Newsletter. Neil reported that 30 individuals, including seven by direct credit, were paying up £5 each to receive the hard copy of the newsletter, resulting in £155 (one person paid a £10 cheque!).

Meeting ended at 4.05pm.

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION KENT GROUP
Income & Expenditure Report 2019

		Income		Expenditure
Events		3148.96		2159.38
			989.58	
Sevenoaks	1191.98			1087.89
		104.09		
Weald	907.80			614.22
		293.58		
White Cliffs	1049.18			457.27
		591.91		
Subs/Newsletter	186.00			334.87
				148.87
Donation		30.00		
Badges		2.00		
Hadrian 100		200.00		
Clothing		163.14		163.19
Christmas Lunch		704.70		794.70
AGM				137.53
Committee hall hire				78.00
Printer				35.00
Post 100 event				240.00
Engraving				18.00
KSS				50.00
		2089.42		1665.29
Excess income over expenditure during 2019		<u>424.13</u>		

End of year balances as at 31/12/2019

Lloyds Bank	6414.08	
Prepayments	244.80	6169.28
Cash		<u>108.35</u>
		<u>6277.63</u>

The group also owns a number of items of equipment and some badges which have an indeterminate value while the group is a going concern and a negligible value on cessation.