

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION — Kent Group

furthering the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking

NEWSLETTER



Kent Group 'dignitaries' on David Thornton's walk, 1st November 2020



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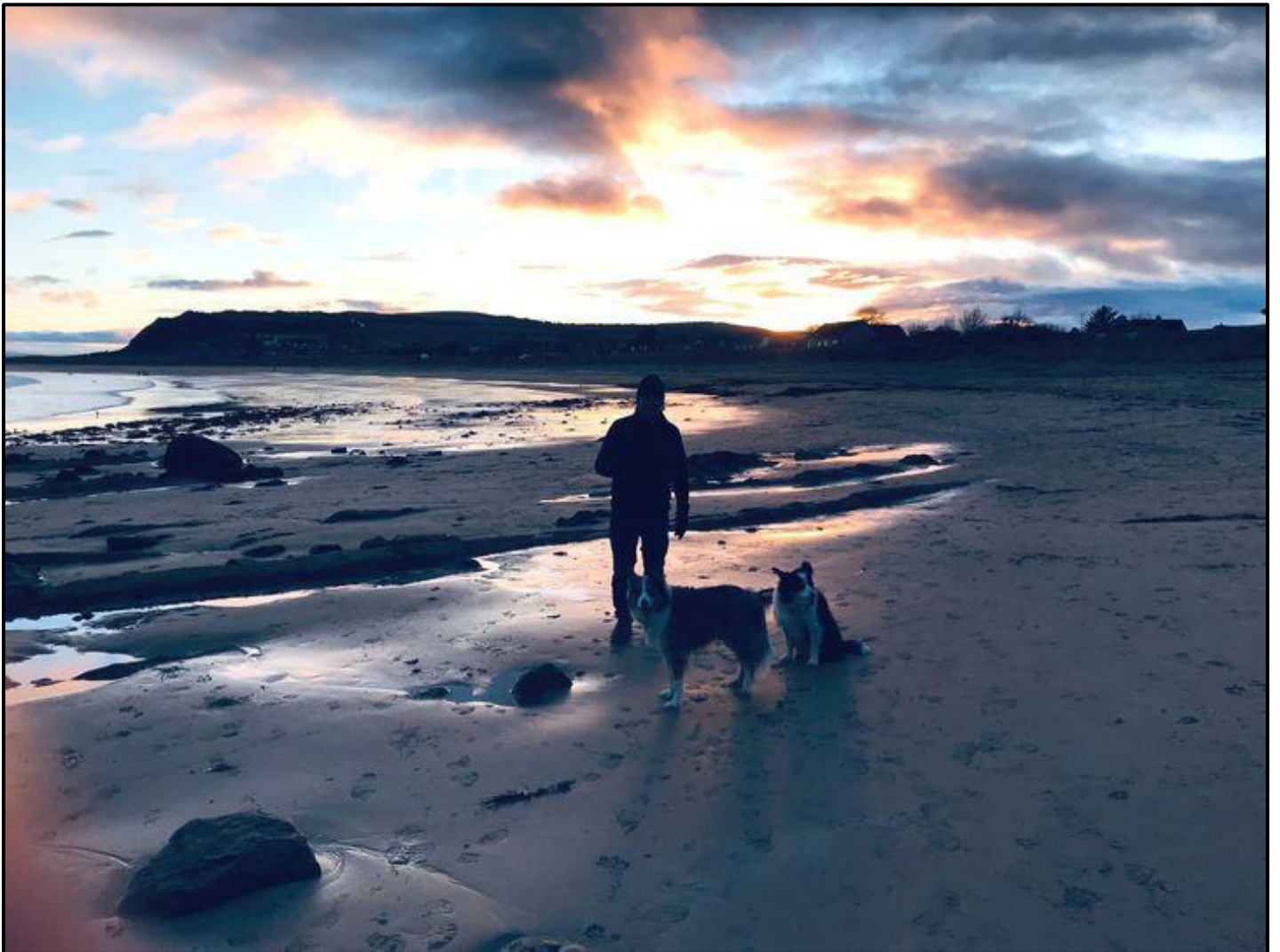
www.ldwa.org.uk/kent



David's venture into Essex



Royal Military Canal, on Penny's walk



Graham with his collies, as the sun was setting at Balintore

WELCOME to the latest edition of the Kent Group Newsletter.

As you will probably be only too well aware, and whilst the country is – hopefully – emerging from the darkest days of the latest coronavirus lockdown, and despite the Government suggesting that ‘all’ outdoor sport is ‘good’, the future of our Challenge Events in particular is as yet undetermined, although we have now had confirmation that Group / Social Walks can re-commence.

For many of us, **Group / Social** walks are the ‘lifeblood’ of the LDWA, and you are all warmly encouraged to sample these; they will often provide a good introduction to a part of the county (*sometimes crossing over into Sussex and/or Surrey*) which is new to you, or will enable you to visit places on your doorstep which you never knew existed (or perhaps had never really appreciated before).

Depending on the location, and also on whether some of our previously well-established public houses have survived the covid-19 pandemic, a ‘lunchtime’ stop is often the order of the day, to enable thirsty walkers to quench their thirst; but best always to be prepared for there no longer being a hostelry nearby, or for the hostelry to be crowded with ‘staycationers’, such that a mutual decision is made that it is best to avoid it ‘this time’. And remember your face mask and hand gel if you wish to enter premises.

Many, but not all, of these Group / Social walks will have one or more short cuts / drop offs for public transport, so please ask the leader if this appeals to you.

Hopefully you will all be aware of, and appreciate, the tremendous amount of work that the (unpaid volunteers of the) LDWA’s National Executive Committee (NEC) has expended in talks with fellow walking organisations, in liaising with the various Government bodies, in order to gain permission for our ‘Organised Sports’ to resume – permission must be granted before we can legally (and with insurance etc) recommence **Challenge Events** in a covid-19 compliant way. In essence, the NEC has worked, and is working, unceasingly to get us ‘walk ready’, and to influence and interpret the Government’s varying guidance.

The coronavirus situation appears to be still almost as fluid as it has been for the last 12 months, although it is to be hoped (*that word ‘hope’ again*) that matters will be far clearer by the end of the Summer – but of course, the virus doesn’t have to obey any rules, and pessimists may well be fearing the worst, particularly if foreign holidays are permitted (or even illegally taken), with the seemingly very real risk that even if the UK is on the right track, the pesky virus sneaks back into the UK, wreaking havoc, overwhelming the NHS and wrecking untold numbers of plans. Kent, of course, is geographically situated in a prime position to catch any new variant – though perhaps we in Kent should refrain from comment, given that ‘our’ covid-19 variant has already wrought worldwide damage (*allegedly*).

Accordingly, and perhaps unnecessarily for me to state this in these strangest of times, I would **urge you always to visit the LDWA and Kent Group websites for current information**, and we must accept that anything in this Newsletter referring to future dates may just be wishful thinking. But even if the situation again lurches out of control, at least we walkers have shown resilience in getting ‘out and about’, in all weathers, even if we have generally been confined to starting from home territory.

This Newsletter is the first following the departure of the Strider Editor to northern Scotland, though we will always be pleased to welcome contributions from Graham – indeed, there is one (plus) in this edition. Graham sends greetings to all his friends in Kent Group and although we were sadly unable to secure any tangible transfer fee from the LDWA North West Grampian Group, he remains an Associate Member of Kent Group, as indeed are many of our readers.

.... which is a good link for me to thank those of you who have provided articles for this Newsletter and a request to keep these coming for future Newsletters, no matter how long ago your adventure, how far away, or how tenuous a connection there is to Kent or to walking (I’m not fussy!). I cannot promise to include everything, but will try

I sincerely trust that you find one or more articles here which will interest you. I have generally kept to the ‘tried and trusted’ format for this edition, but time doesn’t stand still, so expect to see some slight changes in future editions, no matter who the Editor is. Any errors, omissions and inconsistencies in this edition are mine. I can now fully appreciate the so called ‘Butterfly Effect’ (*a single butterfly flapping its wings has the power to set off a string of escalating events that can lead to the formation of a hurricane*) – or, here, the inclusion of just one ‘innocent’ additional word on page 4 could produce untold carnage, destroying all carefully considered spacing etc that the Editor has lovingly factored in, necessitating resizing (already resized, resized) photographs.

Happy, and safe, long distance walking, whenever and wherever.

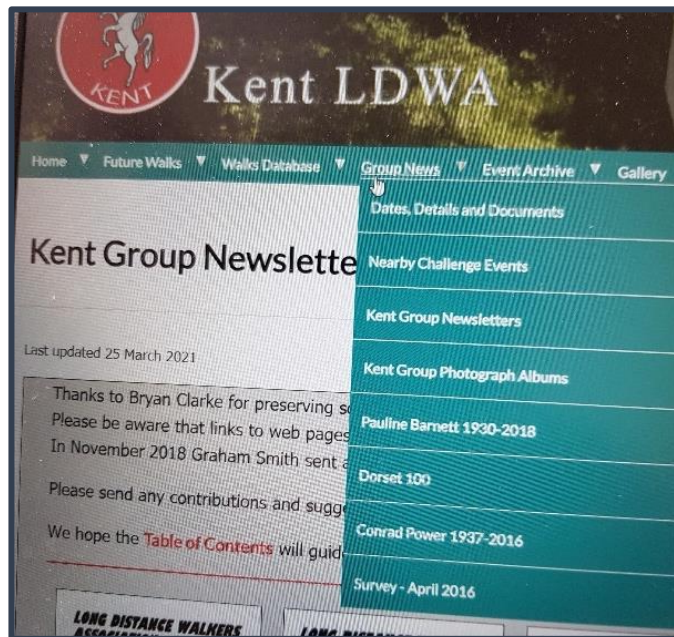
Neil Higham, Newsletter Editor, 8th April 2021

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‘OLD’ KENT GROUP NEWSLETTERS

Michael Headley, of whom more anon, has recently spent countless hours trawling through the **back copies of this Newsletter** (basically, all those from August 2008) and deleting personal information (telephone numbers and addresses etc) so that they are now, we believe, ‘GDPR acceptable’. As such, these Newsletters, containing many articles which we feel are worth re-visiting, are now **available for all to read**, on-line; furthermore, to make it easier to find a particular article, Michael has very kindly tabulated the salient contents of each Newsletter – please visit the Kent Group website, tab to **Group News** and then click on **Kent Group Newsletters**, where you will find that the first ‘icon’ is the (14 page) **TABLE OF CONTENTS** (see below). Enjoy!



(KENT GROUP) PHOTO ALBUMS

Readers will be aware that **Neal O'Rourke** and **Michael Headley** undertook a project last year, digitising the photo albums that Kent Group had – and these photos are now available for all to view on the Kent Group website.

But what about the **physical** albums themselves, I hear you muse, surely the pictures will fade away if left untouched? Well, Helen Franklin has been in touch with Kent County Archives about them being deposited there as a matter of conservation, and we are currently waiting to hear back from them. The Kent Group Committee feels that this is a good idea, provided that there are no strong objections to the photos being taken to / left with an archive.

If any member has an objection to (their) photos being moved to the Kent County Archives, please contact one of the Committee as soon as possible, ie **before an ‘irrevocable’ decision is made**. It is appreciated that quite a few of the photos will be of those who are sadly no longer with us, and hence they are unable themselves to make an objection; on the other hand, as noted, all the photos under discussion are already showing on our website, and hence are ‘open’ to all to view.

KENT GROUP COMMITTEE

Chair
Secretary
Treasurer
Group / Social Walks Organiser
Membership
Newsletter Editor
Member
Member
Member
Member
Member
Member

Stephanie Le Men
Helen Franklin
Peter Jull
Peter Jull
Neil Higham
Neil Higham
Jim Briggs
Andy Clark
Nick Dockree
Nicola Foad
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David Thornton
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Individual details have, where possible, been minimised in this Newsletter in view of our GDPR obligations, and therefore we request that any ‘ordinary’ committee members are initially contacted via one or more of the four named officers above (*unless of course their details are already known to you!*). Equally, no telephone numbers are displayed here – this is deliberate.

Whilst not a formal member of the Committee, our excellent website is maintained by **Michael Headley**, who can be contacted by email at website.kent@ldwa.org.uk. Similarly, **Brian Buttifant**, our **Life President** (*and very valued shoulder to lean on for all sorts of advice*), is no longer a formal member of the Committee – Brian can also be contacted via the Committee, as above.

KENT GROUP COMMITTEE MEETINGS

In the 'olden' days, ie pre-covid, these were generally held 3 times a year in Bearsted; nowadays, meetings are 'monthly', perhaps 10 or 11 times a year, and held via Zoom (*though we may be moving to 'Teams'*); if there is any particular subject that you wish to raise, then please do contact us. Naturally, the Committee also remains in contact via email etc – sometimes even using telephone!

A few extracts from the March 24th 2021 meeting (*issues not covered elsewhere in this Newsletter*)

- As a Group, we will endeavour to be more pro-active towards new Kent-based LDWA members – email and Facebook.
- Publicity – handy 'business cards' (*ie small 'flyers'*) with website and Facebook details, including a QR code, should be available shortly, to hand out to potential new members we may encounter, whenever and wherever. Although these are Kent branded, the recipient doesn't have to be a person from Kent, nor does the card need to be handed out whilst you are walking in Kent, as the aim is to spread the whole LDWA message. *Hopefully, we'll show one in the next Newsletter.*
- We understand that South East Train station car parks are removing their cash machines, so do come prepared if relevant.
- Please be aware - recent weather damage has affected the CP100 route east of Folkestone and also east of St Margaret's.
- We will look into appropriate First Aid courses that members may wish to attend.

2021 KENT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This was held on Sunday 31st January 2021, by Zoom (including telephone). The Minutes (seen and agreed by the Committee), together with the 2020 Accounts, will be distributed in the near future via another communication.

2021 LDWA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This was held on Sunday 7th March 2021 (again by Zoom etc). Whilst your Editor was unable to attend, I have been reliably informed, via other Kent Group Committee members, that the following provides a brief resume of the items discussed.

- *The AGM was a success, without any obvious technical glitches. It is planned to meet physically next year – some attendees suggested a Zoom link also be made available, which would allow those who are unable to travel to attend.*
- *For the first time, the Chair of the Board of Trustees for the Ramblers (Kate Ashbrook) attended our AGM; intended to be reciprocal and continuing over the years, highlighting the wish for both associations to collaborate more in the future.*
- *It was a very moving AGM – David Morgan stepped down from his position of Chairman, to be replaced by Julie Cribb. Sara Dyer is the new 100s Coordinator, replacing Alan Warrington. Karen Pickersgill takes over from Julie as Local Groups Officer. Ken Falconer was elected as Vice President, following the sad death of Ann Sayer.*
- *We – Kent – are looking forward to working with the new team; it will be definitely a very challenging start to their mandate. We would like to thank David and Alan for all their hard work over the last years – it has been a very demanding time for the organisation and we hope that they can now enjoy a well-deserved rest.*
- *David reported that the LDWA and the Ramblers will coordinate their strategy for resuming walking. They are liaising with DCMS / Sport England to try and get more information. So far, unfortunately, no further news on that front.*
- *Activities linked to the new national LDWA website have been stalled due to Covid, and also the fact that the NEC is still looking for a volunteer to become their IT officer. The current website has a lot of issues and has gone down twice in recent weeks, with users being unable to access some facilities at times.*
- *On the finance side, Treasurer John Elrick reported that the LDWA did not suffer any major loss due to Covid.*
- *The NEC is currently investigating, again, if it would be beneficial for the LDWA to obtain charity status.*
- *One point Alan (Warrington) stressed was the importance of First Aid training. He suggested that both he and Mike Childs were lucky to have partners whose training and actions had probably saved their lives.*
- *Several members received volunteer Awards, including our own Michael Headley, nominated by Sarah Turner for his outstanding work on the local website and also for helping the NEC with many IT matters (working behind the scenes).*
- *AGM closed with a speech from Phoebe Smith, who has actively helped setting up the Virtual Hundred, and one from Kate Ashbrook, who highlighted the desire of the Ramblers to integrate more BAME walkers.*

VANGUARD WAY (VGW) 40TH CELEBRATION

Although only 'kissing' the western edge of Kent, the Vanguard Way is well known to many, covering some 66 miles between Croydon and Newhaven. 2021 sees the '**Ruby Anniversary**', making it surely one of the country's most senior walking routes. On 3rd May 1981, Alan Mattingly, then General Secretary of the Ramblers' Association, cut the tape at Gills Lap in Ashdown Forest (*roughly halfway along the VGW route*) to declare the route well and truly open. It was therefore intended to celebrate the anniversary similarly on Monday 3rd May 2021 (*see also Strider 147, August 2020, page 12*). Ideally, this would be part of a six-day crossing of the VGW from south to north, but it currently seems unlikely that this will be practical. Up to date details may be gleaned from the VGW website, www.vanguardway.org.uk.

DAME VERA LYNN MEMORIAL - 3 sites on Dover's iconic White Cliffs being considered

(April 2021) We understand that there are three possible sites being considered along the famous White Cliffs in Dover as a location for a memorial statue to Forces' Sweetheart Dame Vera Lynn. The three sites are the **Western Heights Bowl, St Martins Battery** and the **Citadel**.

RESUMPTION OF GROUP / SOCIAL WALKS

These are now restarting and Peter Jull issued a bulk email on 1st April – the email arrived in the morning, but it was not a joke! Peter has been working hard and has so far lined up seven walks in total, as shown below, to whet your appetite. Until further notice, **registration in advance** will be **required**, so this may mean a little bit of thought beforehand!

Please note that these walks are subject to covid-19 restrictions and regulations, including travel, and it is important to **check the Kent Group website** and/or with the walk leader nearer the time, for any updated information.

| Date | Name | Venue (Start) | Distance | Start At | Leader | Max Number |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Sunday 11 th April | Beale's Revenge | Orlestone Forest | 17 miles | 09:00 | Peter Jull | 30 |
| Sunday 18 th April | Peckham Spring | Hadlow | 20 miles | 09:00 | David Thornton | 30 |
| Sunday 25 th April | Blossoms & Bluebells | Rainham | 15 miles | 09:30 | Jim Briggs | 30 |
| Monday 3 rd May | HPH 13 | Kemsing | 20½ miles | 09:00 | Peter Jull | 30 |
| Sunday 9 th May | Syndale Saunter | Faversham | 21 miles | 09:00 | Cathy Waters | 30 |
| Sunday 16 th May | New World Wines | Leybourne | 20 miles | 09:00 | David Thornton | 30 |
| Sunday 23 rd May | Whit Walk | Sissinghurst | 20½ miles | 09:00 | Peter Jull | 30 |

CHALLENGE EVENTS

The Kent Group has two upcoming events (we say, hopefully), although we must have confirmation from the NEC before we can proceed with these. We have just (1st April) been reminded by the NEC that the effective date for Challenge Events to resume is **wholly reliant on the English Government's phased return to play for 'Step 3', of no earlier than 17 May 2021**. Hence all of the below is provisional, only, at this stage.

THE HIGH WEALD WALK

SUNDAY 11TH JULY 2021**

This will be based in Langton Green, at the Village Hall, with a main route of 27 miles and at least a 15 or 16 mile route. Earliest start probably 08:00, but shorter distance and all runners after 09:15 (but by 10:00), with all to finish by 18:30 (giving 10½ hours maximum). Routes will be primarily off-road, to the north, west and south of Langton Green.

**** Stop Press - this venue on this date is now problematical; a student's revision course is scheduled for the afternoon**

THE WHITE CLIFFS CHALLENGE (WCC)

SATURDAY 28TH AUGUST 2021

From St Margaret's at Cliffe, just outside Dover, starting at 08:30 with completion of the 30 mile route by 20:30 (ie 12 hours), utilising coastal and inland public rights of way.

NB Although the WCC is advertised as being part of the White Cliffs Walking Festival (WCWF), the WCC is purely an LDWA event and, assuming approval is received from the LDWA NEC, this event will proceed irrespective of whether the WCWF decide to cancel the festival as a whole (or, possibly, the WCWF will not be cancelled, but equally will not be promoted widely this year).

Committee Thoughts on these two Challenge Event

Please note that the Kent Group Committee has, as of the end of March 2021, decided that, if we can, we will be proceeding with both events; however, once given the go ahead by the NEC, we will still need to check that we can hire the relevant hall and that appropriate covid-19 precautions are (or will be) in place. We have not completely ruled out the possibility that the starts will be from a (large) car park, but the 'known unknowns' currently include what will be happening with local sports and youth clubs, and also staycationing (will all village and hall car parks be full each weekend?). The 'unknown knowns' include the likely obligatory Risk Assessment (*see below*), whilst the 'unknown unknowns' include, well, quite frankly, the currently unknowns.

There is also the little matter of a **Risk Assessment** which we understand will need to be completed **before** the LDWA NEC provides approval (and hence insurance cover provided) for each separate event – **"No NEC Approval"** equates to **"No Event"**. The Event Risk Assessment will undoubtedly be more comprehensive than that used for Group / Social Walks.

Please note that Kent Group Committee has elected **not** to open either event for entries until and unless the events are able to proceed. This is partly done on cost grounds, but primarily it saves any hassle (and costs) for all three parties (you, us and probably SIEntries) in having to make refunds should the event be cancelled. We believe that we can put on both events at a few weeks' notice, ie providing sufficient time for sufficient numbers to enter to make an event viable. Equally, we are loathe to pay to hire any Halls, unless we can be sure that the event will proceed.

Naturally, the sooner we hear that Challenge Events can recommence the better, and we will keep the websites (LDWA and Kent) updated as quickly as possible.

BUT what if both of these Challenge Events are cancelled? In this case, it is likely that we will move quickly to have one or more **Anytime Challenge Events** – but part of the rationale for **not** having already introduced these already is the fact that official guidance has been to 'stay at home' or 'stay local', which with Kent being out on a bit of a limb is not ideal. Inviting LDWA members from almost anywhere to travel to East Kent (say) would certainly not endear us to the powers that be.

We shall say more about the **2022 SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR** event in the December 2021 issue (possibly also in August 2021).

THE 2021 Y 100 SIR FYNWY - VIRTUAL (Y100SF in short)

As at the end of March, some 17 Kent Group members had signed up for this virtual event and some of these have shared their thoughts on the LDWA Forum; I am also aware of 2 or 3 others who may well enter. The overall entry so far is north of 350 (*with no upper limit*).

‘Our’ 17 members (*3 of whom live outside of Kent – we believe that they will be walking ‘elsewhere’*) are:

| | | |
|----------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Don Arthurs | Jill Green | Neal O’Rourke |
| Antony (Tony) Barter | Barbara Hutton | Judy Rickwood |
| Andrew Boulden | Dawn Jones | Steve Russell |
| John Cook | Peter Jull | Alan Stewart |
| Marshall Elliott | Don Newman | Keith Warman |
| Andrew Gordon | Jan O’Rourke | |

It will be fascinating to see whether those ‘merely’ doing loops from home fare any better than those aiming for the theoretically harder, ie a linear or circular route. There are undoubtedly major advantages and disadvantages with both approaches. These can perhaps be summarised as ‘mental torture’ versus ‘physical torture’, or ‘too much in the way of home comforts and flexibility, meaning the sheer willpower required to leave home will be “off the scale” later in the event, with fewer but longer stops, and an increased chance of over-familiarity with the routes, proving one’s downfall’ for loopers, versus the ‘need to just keep plodding on with a definitive end point in mind, getting ever closer, but with uncertain drinks and food stops’ for linear / circular eventers.

Please Note: as shown on the LDWA Forum (Virtual 100eers in Kent), some sections of the Cinque Ports 100 route, notably just east of Folkestone and also east of St Margaret’s, have suffered recent weather damage, so please make sure that you are aware of any re-routing if your intended route passes these areas – and especially if this will be during the dark.

A little birdie, otherwise known as the LDWA’s 100s recorder, Mr Keith Warman, has told me that, of the first 279 entries, some 98, ie over a third, have yet to achieve a 100 completion; this seems a staggeringly high proportion, although it should be caveated by the fact that this 98 is not broken down between those for whom this is a genuine first attempt and those who have struggled manfully in the past (or, in cricketing parlance, ‘failed to trouble the scorers’). Equally, there will be a number of these 98 who are ‘only’ gunning for a 50 mile completion, thus gaining qualification for the 2022 Trans-Pennine 100 (TP100)* when, please, some sort of normality may have returned. As well as first-timers, others are aiming for their 10th, 20th or even 30th 100 completion.

** if planning ahead, an early warning – the TP100 will be different, as it starts on **Friday 3rd June 2022**, which is a bank holiday; the normal end of May bank holiday weekend has been radically altered, as part of the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee celebrations*

As those who have completed a 100 will know only too well, it isn’t just the physical pain that has to be overcome and the tortuous mental agony endured – for this event, nutrition and hydration will have to be planned out, so I am full of admiration for all, but particularly the first-timers. We wish success to all those attempting this most iconic of distances, and trust that the weather gods will smile on all, ie not too hot, cold or wet, not too much sun, wind, cloud or snow(!), nor even too still – and just to note that, regrettably, a full moon is scheduled for a couple of nights earlier (*bother*). Oh! – and also not too hard underfoot.

Given that this is – at least hopefully – a ‘one off’ 100, with ‘everybody’ doing their own thing, **please could all Kent members shown above forward an article to me by the middle of July** (*for inclusion in the August Newsletter, obviously*), irrespective of whether their Y100SF goal has been achieved. It doesn’t have to be lengthy, a brief summary will suffice, covering the area or trails walked, perhaps the length of each loop (if relevant) and any highlights and ‘experiences’.

Your Editor concluded many years ago that he is now much too slow, decrepit and incapable, and was never going to contemplate participating in another 100. **But** this year offers him an unexpected opportunity – a golden shot – and likely his only chance to increase his 100 completions (by some 7.7%). He is still mulling over the idea, seeing how he can truly finesse the event to his own idiosyncratic specifications (eg start 02:30 Saturday; 7 to 20 mile loops from home; jelly(!) at each ‘checkpoint’; a foot bath or shower, and a change of clothes and walking shoes, each loop; only out for say 2½ hours on Saturday night (*judicious use of the 2 hour rule!*); avoiding stiles where possible; finish by 23:00 Sunday – job done! *Ha, if only it were that simple*). He must be mad

NB The official closing date for Y100SF entries is **23rd April**, so there is still time for **YOU** (*and me?*) to enter!

One last thought – promise – on the Y100SF; given the vagaries of measuring distances through the countryside, even using the latest electronic gadgets, entrants (particular those doing loops) should perhaps set their sights on an overall distance of **101 or even 102 miles**, rather than just the plain hundred, so as to be absolutely certain of nailing the 100 miles; *imagine finishing, and then finding that you are going to be marked down to just 98.3 miles. Oh, the agony, doesn’t even bear thinking about.*

Can you help? Whilst those shown above, but particularly the ‘loopers’, may not absolutely confirm their intentions until the last minute – even to themselves! – if you are able to spare some time and accompany one or more of these walkers over the weekend (Saturday night in particular could otherwise be lonely for some, as could Sunday afternoon / evening, when the going really will become tough, mentally and physically), then please do get in touch. This could be the ideal opportunity to take in that night-time adventure you’ve always promised yourself (and there should hopefully be no pacing worries, as you will likely be far fresher than the eventer).

MICHAEL HEADLEY – LDWA VOLUNTEER AWARD

As noted on page 13 of the current (April 2021) Strider, Michael has (deservedly) received a special award from the LDWA in recognition of his unstinting, behind the scenes, work on the main LDWA website (as well as on the Kent Group website). Sarah Turner's nomination for Michael is shown in Strider. Michael has been the Kent Group webmaster for quite a few years now.

From my own viewpoint, the most remarkable thing about Michael is that no matter what time of day or night, Michael will somehow have already updated the Kent Group website – sometimes I think that Michael even dictates the news!

In part recognition of his award, but not wishing to directly compete with Strider's own Question Time, the Kent Group Committee decided that it was fair time for Michael to make the news, and that he should be the ~~guinea pig~~ first beneficiary of our very own **10 Q & A**, so here goes:

1. When did you join the LDWA?

My first LDWA walk was the High Weald event from Goudhurst in July 2008. I must have joined in 2009, taking advantage of the concession that allows you three months free membership from October onwards.

2. How did you hear about the organisation?

In 2008 I searched online for walking opportunities to prepare myself for a family gathering in Scotland that included a 15-mile walk near Loch Ness. Thanks to Jan and Neal O'Rourke for welcoming me on the Smugglers event that year.

3. Where was your first social walk, and any other memories of this day?

I think the first was a Cream Tea Walk with Pluckley Church providing the Cream Tea. Was that the day we had to navigate through a tall, dense crop of maize? And were there wasps?

4. What is your favourite social walk or challenge event distance, and why?

For a challenge event the distance should be around 25 miles - a relative sprint that finishes in daylight. Or do I mean a 50 miler with breakfast at one o'clock in the morning?

5. What is the best piece of kit that you have owned that cannot be replaced?

This is tricky - when it's gone it's gone? No irreplaceable kit that I can think of, but memory, stamina, breath and body heat may dwindle over time.

6. When walking a Hundred, what have been your highest and lowest moments?

Finishing (twice) and not finishing (more often).

7. How would you describe your perfect walk?

It would need surprise, adventure and casual delight (sticky buds today).

8. What is the strangest sight you have seen on an LDWA walk?

Not strange but memorable - a fiery winter sunset viewed through the arches of the Ouse Valley Viaduct from somewhere near Ardingly. For strangeness, all the little phantom family groups that populated the landscape on the later stages of the Heart of Scotland 100.

9. What is the best piece of walking advice you have received?

Don't stop!

10. What is your favourite walking area (outside of Kent)?

The Camino (GR65) from Le Puy to Figeac, particularly the plateau of Aubrac. Every day had its challenge and its reward.

and here are a couple of unattached "in-fillers" for consumption



Langdon Cliffs – from a different perspective

A KENTISH PRAYER

submitted by Graham Smith

Our Father, who art in Hever,
Allhallows be thy name.
Thy Kingsdown come,
They Willesborough
In Erith as it is in Hever.
Give us this day our daily Bridge,
And forgive us our Trottiscliffes,
As we forgive those who
Trottiscliffe against us.
And lead us not into Tenterden,
But deliver us from Elvington,
For Elham and Eastwell.
Gravesend.

A HEBRIDEAN ADVENTURE – AND MORE

Andrew Melling

*(This article is based on an adventure from some 50 years ago and, more importantly, the year **before** the LDWA was formed – but anyone knowing their LDWA history should immediately be able to identify two chaps Andrew refers to in his penultimate paragraph; any readers requiring clarification, please refer to the History page on the LDWA website, or contact this Newsletter Editor. Andrew is easily Kent's 'oldest' LDWA member, his Membership Number being 85)*

Inspired by a series of magazine articles (Journey to Jura by Showell Styles, The Climber, 1967/8) I planned my own Hebridean holiday. Dad was to visit uncle in York so I drove us to the A1/A64 junction and hitched on to Ardrossan. 1971 had seen hard times and I was surprised at the number of new registration cars around the port. Macbrayne dropped me in Brodick and I climbed far enough up Goat Fell to find a nice pitch. Down again in the morning, I caught the next ferry to Tarbert and started walking south down the east coast of the Kintyre peninsula.

The map shows a path south east of Tarbert which peters out after three miles but I was used to bogtrotting. I didn't squander my few rolls of film recording my camp that night but the next night I enjoyed at the Argyll Arms Hotel, Southend. As the name suggests, I was at the bottom of the peninsula and soon had views of the lighthouse at Mull – but not singing 'Mull of Kintyre' to myself, as Paul hadn't written it yet.



Mull Lighthouse



Tropical garden at Gigha

After another night's wild camping, I reached Tayinloan for the ferry to Gigha. Relying, perhaps mistakenly, on the Showell Styles account, I headed straight to the end of the island to catch the ferry on to Islay but it didn't come. I was at the wrong end! Gigha is a tourist hotspot with tropical islands and little opportunity for wild camping. The hotel was full but they had arrangements. It was OK to share a room with the guy who had ferried me across from Kintyre. Next day, I was at the right end of Gigha, ready to hoist the signal up the flagpole to tell the ferry I wanted to board. I hadn't expected the Hebrides to be so busy in late September and the Port Askaig Hotel had no room for me. I booked a room for the last night of my stay and boarded the ferry for the short crossing to Jura. After another bout of bogtrotting, negotiating several streams on the way, I reached high ground and camped for the night nestled between the Paps of Jura. No earth to take a peg, so I tied my guys to rocks, but I was comfortable enough on my Karrimat.



Campsite on the Paps of Jura



The very same tent in November 2020

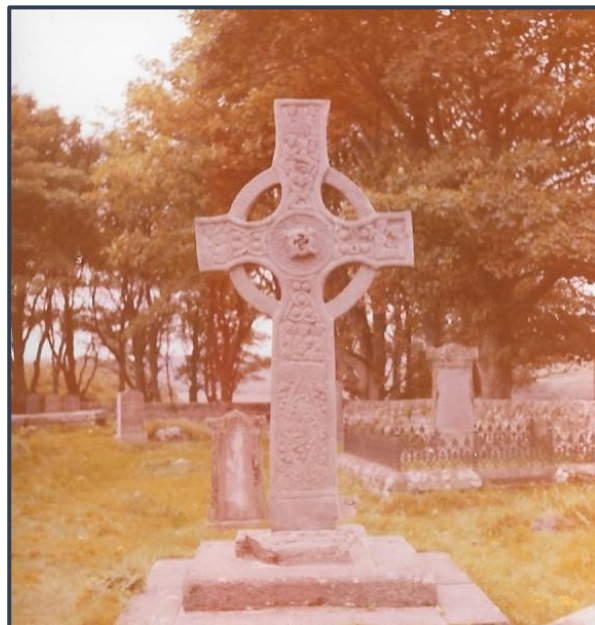
Descending next day, I crossed back to Islay. In the meantime, the car ferry had been taken off for servicing, so I was carried on the motor launch by my roommate from Gigha. I headed towards Bridgend and camped within a short walk of an inn. On my way to the inn, I fell in with a man who insisted on buying me the local spirit while he had a cognac. Why? 'Too peaty' was his explanation.

My next stop was an inn by the Bruichladdich distillery where I stayed three nights. At dinner and breakfast I caught up with my postcard writing, to the amusement of the landlord's three little daughters who took turns to serve me. The next day, I walked out to the remote Kilchoman church and celtic cross. That night I got caught up with an Agatha Christie and finished it, to the detriment of my beauty sleep, waking late in the morning to blazing sunshine. But I had lost nothing. It had been raining all morning! My

walk took me past dusk and I learnt how to trace a path by the sparse evening light reflecting on bent grasses. This was all on a weekend, depriving me of the opportunity to tour the distillery.



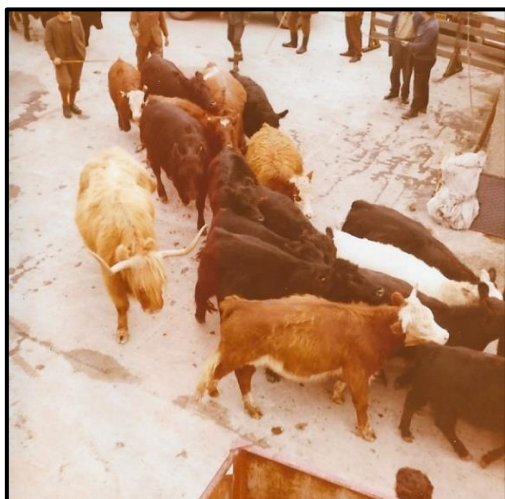
Kilchoman Church



Kilchoman Cross

I had two more nights wild camping. I visited Kildalton Chapel and celtic cross on the east coast, skirting a two mile length of the south coast with settlements, familiar to whisky lovers, of Laphroiaig, Lagavulin and Ardbeg. The fine weather did not last. In full waterproofs, I was crossing the empty moors when two deerstalkers accosted me, complaining that I 'couldn't be less camouflaged'. In my royal blue cagoule and navy blue overbreeches, I was a lot less un-camouflaged than I might have been! Eventually, I reached the Port Askaig Hotel for my last night on the Hebrides.

I neglected to tell the hotel that I was on an early ferry and, rather than miss breakfast, I missed the boat. The later boat took me on an excursion, a sort of mini cruise, out to Oronsay and Colonsay before returning to Craighouse on Jura, where I watched highland cattle boarding, and then West Tarbert. I had missed the last Clyde Ferry of the year so had a four hour bus ride via Inveraray to my friend Dennis in Glasgow. I was nevertheless in time for dinner at The Cattleman (*gammon, chips and veg - 75p, claret - £1.25 a bottle*).



Highland cattle boarding the ferry, Craighouse, Jura



Beinn an Oir (Jura's highest point)

Next day, I hitched to Church Stretton for more walking. The restaurant I chose for dinner was a bit posh. Knowing that roast saddle of lamb was hard to get right, suspecting the portions would be small, and having had just an apple to eat since breakfast, I chose the steak pie, chips and peas. It was good. The plate bearing the pie had just enough space for the peas and a separate plate the same size was filled with chips. Despite my initial hunger, I declined the offered seconds of pie and extra chips.

In the morning, I met my friend Keith who was joining me on my third attempt at the Longmynd Hike, with a start time of 3.00 pm. As in the previous two years, the weather was excellent and I was able to map read at night by moonlight. The Longmynd was not a team event but the rules made us form groups overnight. Keith and I were grouped with Chris and Alan from Surrey whom I had met here the year before. Chris had a stride similar to mine, likewise Alan and Keith, and so we passed the night. And on to the finish. Chris spoke enthusiastically about an idea he and Alan were developing for a sort of information exchange through which subscribers might learn of events like this and long walks generally.

In its fifth year, The Longmynd was becoming quite well known so, although I took 2 hours off my previous time, I slipped from 9th to 17th place. But I was content to be driven home, reflecting on a fortnight of good and varied walking.

I was looking for a long walk to do whilst my wife was away on holiday in October

(NB 2019, so **pre-pandemic**)

Day 1: Started pleasantly, but my plan to cross the Severn by the A490 bridge changed when I saw the number of lorries on the road and no footpath, so the B4381 became the alternative crossing. I stopped for a newspaper in Welshpool and then onto Glyndwr's Way. Now the hills started. I was astonished to find Welshpool golf club on top of one.

Day 2: Now with the stick unfolded, and after buying a newspaper from the village shop, I re-joined the Way. There were warning signs in the wood of potential logging activity but no noise, so no detour from the track. Later, I was confronted by a gooey, muddy mess of a track. The stick was invaluable in locating the shallowest (up to top of laces) route for half a mile. A few miles later I stopped for a chat with an old guy walking in the opposite direction (the normal route). I reflected afterwards that he was probably my age but was nearing the walk completion, so that affected his appearance! A few light showers were then encountered. I met three young guys walking the normal route in full weather gear. I soon found out why. Too late, I got soaked. The rain became heavier, and with head down I missed the short cut turn off the Way to the Rhiwlas B & B. This meant a long walk round the road. The B & B gave me an apartment with full heater on. Waterproof inner bags had kept my rucksack load dry, and I managed to dry everything else out by the morning. Newspaper in shoes did the trick there, so I kept some back for the next night. Excellent meal. Recommended.

Day 3: Full wet gear on from start. Just as well, as another very wet day ensued. The highlight(?) of the day was about one and half miles of exposed, open, rough, boggy, moorland with no discernible path. Fortunately, short yellow topped posts every 50/100 m or so helped, although not always visible amongst the long rough grasses. More hills. There was a self-check-in at the Wynnstay Arms, Llanbrynmair: "Steve-Room 1". The room needed some TLC, but the B & B was inexpensive and the landlady very pleasant. Newspaper in shoes again.

Day 4: Another wet, hilly day. Constant noise of running water. One ford had a new footbridge. Great! I opened the gate the other side and looked at the uphill boulder track. A rushing stream down to the river! That day, all the tracks with inclines were flowing water. *Thought for the Day:* How long does it take to get Trench Foot? I was amused to see Machynlleth golf course with sheep grazing on it plus a couple of golfers. My B & B, The White Lion, was absolutely heaving at 16.45. I had to wait my turn at the bar before I could book in. I popped out to the upmarket hotel to eat. Calm & Quiet.

Day 5: Rest day. I know, I'm a wimp compared to the rest of you, but I don't care! I watched the Wales rugby game on large screen whilst breakfasting. Quite a few Red shirts doing same. I visited the Laundrette. I watched the Japan game. I looked at the contours for tomorrow but wished I hadn't. The pub was bursting at the seams for the Man U v Liverpool football match on the large screen. It seems rugby is more important in the South. Newspaper in shoes again

Day 6: No rain! A lovely walk until about 10 miles, when I looked up and wished I hadn't. A constant Zig Zag climb with lots of pauses. *Thought for the Day:* Should I be doing this at my age? A friendly welcome at Y Star pub, Dylife awaited. Recommended old drovers pub. Newspaper in shoes again



Day 7: No rain but back to soggy, boggy long grass. A pleasant walk downhill into Llanidloes, a lovely little old market town. The Coach & Horses B & B was superb. Newspaper in shoes again

Day 8: I relented and took some Ibuprofen for the left shoulder pain. A lovely walk with good views. On route at the left hand edge of a field, when I spotted a sheep on its back with its immobile legs in the air in the middle of the field. It appeared to be dead so I went over to check. As I got close it struggled to right itself, but was obviously exhausted from effort. I bent down, and with my hands underneath it, lifted it into its feet. Off it went, but then paused to look back at me as if to say 'I could have done it by myself!' No, it couldn't. I saw the farmer a couple of fields later, and he said that both he and a neighbour had lost several sheep like that. The Oaks B & B at Abbycwmhir is run by a long distance walker, so a knowledgeable conversation ensued. Recommended.

Our intrepid explorer, Steve

Day 9: Ibuprofen again for shoulder. There were some good views during the day. Towards the end I went through a farmyard with a fierce and very aggressive Jack Russell. It didn't just see me off its territory but continued to harass me for some way. The walking stick came in handy, not to hit it but to keep swirling around. I stayed in an absolutely delightful B & B at Brandy House Farm, Felindre. Recommended. *Thought for the Day:* have my rucksack taken onto Knighton the next day. My host subsequently arranged this for me.

Day 10: Incessant rain all day. The medium rain became heavy rain, and then became really heavy rain. No views because I was in low rain cloud all day. I discovered that when I had given my waterproofs a technical wash & re-proofing earlier in the year, I hadn't rinsed them properly. I was covered in soap suds during the afternoon. But I didn't mind! I was rucksackless! *Thought for the Day:* I'll watch the England game in the morning, forgo the day's walking and go by Taxi back to Montgomery. I booked this with the Taxi firm that transferred my rucksack to the George & Dragon, Knighton. Newspaper in shoes again.

Day 11: I enjoyed a leisurely breakfast before the England game. Knighton is on the Wales/England border and ten of us, including Tom the Landlord originally from Whitstable, all English, watched a fantastic game of rugby. It had rained all night and morning and so I apprehensively waited for my taxi at noon. It arrived on time but the first words were "I don't know if we'll get out of Knighton, the main road is flooded and closed, and other roads are becoming impassable." We drove very carefully on a long, circuitous, route through many dodgy flooded roads to Montgomery. The taxi driver only wanted to accept the pre-agreed price for his trouble. He still had to get back to Knighton and the rain hadn't eased. I made him take extra.

Thoughts afterwards:

- I will probably walk another National Trail, but only one where I can have my rucksack transferred. The last day, despite the rain, was so easy having had the weight taken off my back. Yes, I am a wimp.
- I will reproof my waterproofs and give an extra coating at the cuffs and hem.
- If I have a full Welsh/English breakfast each morning I don't really need to carry a packed lunch.
- Have Newspaper for shoes!
- I'll get my gps watch repaired, as it stopped finding satellites on day 2 and gave me soul destroying misleading distances walked thereafter.

The Garmin handheld GPS I bought from GPS Training specifically for following the route of Glyndwr's Way proved invaluable. However, when it pings because a waymark is reached, I must look at it and also look around. It was very useful in getting me back on course when I strayed, due to either having my head down in heavy rain, or head up looking at the views.

I am writing this short article on Saturday 27th February, just five days after the Government announced their planned road map out of the current lockdown, so hopefully by the time you're casting your eye over this, there will have been sufficient lifting of restrictions that we aren't a million miles away from being able to walk together in groups of some kind.

Without stating the obvious, these have undoubtedly been some of the most unnerving and troubled times any of us have ever experienced. Therefore, my decision to choose the Essex Way could perhaps be construed as being very much in keeping with the strangeness of this period. I mean, come on, the Essex Way!! Really?? When you consider some of the other amazing paths on offer, the Two Moors Way, Dales Way, Wessex Ridgeway, to name just three, it makes my decision to settle on the Essex Way all the more puzzling. Perhaps I could have been a little under the weather myself when this choice was made!? However, in its defence, it was relatively local, easy to get to and from and will ultimately have been a trail against which I would have been very eager to place a tick. Never judge a book by its cover, as they say, so I did indeed approach this trail with the same vigour and excitement as any other.

Off I set from West Malling, early doors, train to Victoria and various tube lines to the starting point at Epping station and my first and long 27-mile day ahead. As you head your way out of Epping you become immediately aware of the wall of noise generated by the M11 and M25 intersection, which in itself I found quite uplifting. I momentarily dwelt on the fact that I'm here, doing what I love the most, strolling through and discovering the countryside of Essex, with four days ahead of me and with all the freedom I could wish for, as opposed to chugging my way around that motorway. It really did put a smile on my face along with that lovely tingle of excitement. After that, the day panned out much as I had expected, as I worked my way through miles of flat arable land, but passing some rather nice Essex villages, Fyfield, Good Easter and Pleshey along the way, before reaching Little Green and a pub called The Compasses. Great place this was and very popular too, judging by the busy restaurant. So busy in fact that I couldn't get a table, so I ate in my room. I can see why it was so popular because the food, when it arrived, was really very good.



With 26 miles to get through on day two, I pre-planned skipping breakfast and was up and away just before 7.00am, choosing to buy something in Great Leighs about 5 miles later. I quite like starting my days in this way, leaving early to catch the first light of the morning and building up an appetite before eating. I purchased some provisions from a really old fashioned post office on the outskirts of the town, the kind of place where the proprietor makes the clingfilm wrapped sandwiches fresh that morning, as opposed to buying in the mass produced pre-packaged stuff. I had a good old chat with the lady behind the counter, who I presumed was the owner, before setting off again.

This day was very similar to the first, being mainly flat farmland, but with the added bonus of two river valleys as I trundled along a section of the Blackwater Valley and the River Colne, towards the outskirts of Colchester, my next stop. This was a simple Airbnb, the owner of which happened to be a private chef. I was really interested to listen to how he had adapted his business from cooking

in people's houses to doing high end packed lunch and evening meal deliveries, although it was very clear that he was, like many other people, just about scratching a living during this difficult period. I don't know what he cooked for himself that night, but it smelt ridiculously good compared with the rather bland and misleadingly named Super Noodles I was knocking up in my room. I wish I'd put in a pre-order and had it freshly delivered to my bedroom door!

Day three was without doubt the day I was looking forward to the most, as the route took me through what is referred to as Constable Country. Dedham, which I walked through late morning was teeming with people. I could see why, as it really is a



lovely place, with a large and beautiful church, in which I had a little peek (muddy boots removed) before setting off again. Shortly after Dedham, the route picks up a section of the Essex Stour River Valley heading eastwards towards Manningtree and Mistley, destination for my last overnight stop and a very comfortable self-contained Airbnb. This place was a stone's throw from a company called EDME, who I remembered visiting back in the late 1980s with a work colleague. It's a family-owned business, one of the oldest and largest graining, malting and flavouring companies in the UK.

The last day, Sunday October 11th, was my birthday and with the prospect of a bottle of champagne and special dinner prepared and served by my daughters I was, once again, up and away nice and early and with an extra spring in my step. I only had a further 13 miles to do, over terrain which much reminded me of the salt flats and marshlands around Faversham and Seasalter. As I headed along the last section of coastal path into Harwich, the final destination for this trail, I was able to look across the Stour estuary towards Felixstowe and, what appeared to me, to be just about the biggest container ship I had ever seen. When you clock these out at sea they look impressive enough, but up close for the first time gives you a realisation of the enormous scale of these vessels. I grabbed the next available train back to Liverpool Street Station, jumped on the tube and then the train back to West Malling, ready for a trail completion and birthday celebration.

So what of the Essex Way? It was ok, an enjoyable and relaxing four days and a chance to walk through a county I had only ever previously driven through. I find that all landscapes, spectacular or not, have their own unique attraction and in that regard the Essex Way was no different. I wouldn't rush to go back and do it again, but then I wouldn't do that for any of the trails I've done, if only because there are so many more to do. However, I have every intention of returning to this county in the future to complete a couple of specific trails, St Peter's Way, which comes highly recommended and The Saffron Trail. So I reckon I'll be seeing you on foot again soon, Essex.

HOW TO CELEBRATE A WEDDING ANNIVERSARY IN LOCKDOWN

Penny Southern

You surprise your partner with a long walk.... 27.6 miles in 7 hours 36 minutes, no better way to celebrate your anniversary.

I'd just finished reading *Water Ways* (A thousand miles along Britain's canals) by Jasper Winn. I was inspired by his enthusiasm about the thousand miles of wet roads where he discovered a world of wildlife corridors, he shared journeys with some of the last working boat people and meets anglers, walkers, runners, boaters, activists, volunteers and eccentrics who have made the waterways their home.

I did a little more preparation with a quick read of *The Royal Military Canal (RMC) – History and Guide* by John Winnifrith, worth every penny of the £4.95 I paid for it!

I now felt equipped with enough information and inspiration to pack our rucksacks ready for the walk.

I have to agree with Graham Smith's comments in the Kent LDWA Newsletter back in September 2015, sharing his uncertainty about doing a flat walk; I'm more used to planning walks up hill and down dale, across rugged trails and mainly up north, not 28 flat miles with the start only a mile from my house. It certainly ticked the box for the stay local lockdown rule

The Start. Seabrook, Kent. The first of the canals' two sections, this one ending at Iden Lock, East Sussex.

At 7am on the 15th of June 2020 we set off, rucksacks full of goodies (no chance of anything open on route!) and home baked anniversary cake!



The story of the RMC starts in 1802; worried about Napoleon's intended invasion, Colonel John Brown felt the original defense plan of flooding Romney Marsh wasn't going to work, so he came up with 2 new proposals to protect the vulnerable coast line. Firstly, Martello Towers for heavy guns and troops (6 had been built by 1805 in the Romney Marsh area) and secondly the RMC; its main purpose was the fact that it was built in reaches, angled to one another, so cannon fire could be used against troops attempting to cross and secondly and most important, to allow horse drawn barges to carry troops, munitions and rations to any threatened point.

The first sod was turned on the 30th October 1804 and the River Rother was reached 22 months later in August 1806. The 3-mile extension, from Winchelsea to Cliff End / Pett Level was not finished until 1809, and the total cost of building was over £230,000.

What an anniversary gift, not only were we going to enjoy a 28-mile walk, my wonderful husband would also be getting a history lesson. A gift that just keeps giving

It was such a beautiful morning but with it, the silence of lockdown and the uncertainty of the pandemic, nothing open and very few people out and about, eerie and surreal.

However, we weren't put off and soon passed Hythe, onto Lympne Castle, always a treat on this part of the canal walk, seeing the odd giraffe, ostrich and rhino, it's as if you've walked through another continent.

Once we left the well-known part of the Kent RMC, we started passing the beautiful landmarks of St Rumwold's church, Cosway Obelisk, and more churches at Ruckinge, Kenardington and Appledore, alongside amazing wildlife of herons, cormorants, swans and the distinct noise of the marsh frog.

The walk is dotted with very interesting and informative signs along the route. Really useful and well worth a read as they bring the history of the canal alive as well as pointing out the extensive wildlife.

We stopped just past Appledore for a bite to eat, we sat on the edge of the canal with our picnic, enjoying the view, the silence and the warmth of the midday sun, and it was beautiful.

It's fresh water in the canal and there is a flourishing population of fish, some of which you can see when you walk over the many bridges. The trees, Elms, Hawthorns, Sycamores, Limes and Ash were a wonderful piece of planning. Fantastic plant life can be seen as we walked along, water lily, flowering rush, fleabane and many more. Plus plenty of birdlife – we spotted Wagtails, Terns, Herons, sadly not the Kingfishers but as we walked past Iden Lock and into East Sussex towards the The Rother we spotted 4 pairs of Shelduck, I'd never seen these before and once home I had to look them up to identify them.

Rye was not far off and we could see the impressive church above the town in the distance. We walked through Rye, such a beautiful but empty place, until we spotted an Ice Cream van! Who'd have thought that such a sight would bring such joy and of course that much needed 99, large one please... we certainly know how to celebrate!



Now to the last sector of the canal, Winchelsea to Pett and, not to be missed, the short detour to Camber Castle; I had no idea that this castle was here, let alone one that was built by Henry VIII. It was such an idyllic place to stop and enjoy what was left in our flask and our last piece of cake before we headed on to the excellent path, which took us to the end of our journey. It was a relief to see houses in the last hundred yards and the actual end of the canal which was opposite public toilets, but we didn't hang around. Instead we headed straight to the beach to bathe our tired feet in the cool sea.

What an amazing day, full of treats and an excellent introduction to long distance walking, I couldn't think of a better way to celebrate our anniversary – although I'm sure I heard my husband mumbling about booking a restaurant for next year!

POSTCARD FROM SCOTLAND

Graham Smith

AS I write this (on February 14), the temperature in Tain has risen to the dizzy height of 3C degrees – positively balmy compared with the last few days, when it has continually been zero or two to three (or more) degrees below. Before Tuesday, I had been saying that we had been lucky with the weather. While most of the rest of Scotland – and, by all accounts, most of England – had been affected by heavy snow, Tain had just had a couple of light smatterings. But on Tuesday, we had a good foot of the white stuff, interspersed with clear blue skies and sunshine – and then more snow. One of our neighbours said it was the heaviest snowfall in the area for a good 10 years. But it does appear that things are going to improve, with temperatures due to hit 8C degrees most of next week.

Anyway, I have to say I was most touched by the lovely This Is Your Life-type presentation made for me at the Kent LDWA AGM. It was totally unexpected, and it was so good to hear Joy Davies and Mike Pursey – the closest of my many friends in the group – say a few words. It was quite overwhelming, and I was very grateful to Stephanie Le Men, Nicola Foad and Helen Franklin for the work that went into it. I thought the AGM went very well, with lots of credit due to Stephanie and Helen for organising it. Brian Buttifant and I agreed afterwards that, with such a dynamic new committee, the future of the group is in very good hands.



Graham, Fen behind, by a trig point (“how I love those!”) at Kiltearn, just beyond Cromarty Firth



Sarah with all five dogs at Golspie

Sarah and I have now been in our new surroundings for two months, and while I continue to miss my friends in Kent LDWA, it is good to be able to see our daughter Jessica regularly, and the scenery is, of course, quite breathtaking. Jessica teaches special needs children at a school in Alness, about 14 miles away. Like her parents, Jessica has dogs – a Portuguese Podengo called

Tumble and a cross-Dachshund called Caper – and Sarah takes them out every lunchtime while Jess is at work. So, I suppose you could say that the reason we moved to Scotland was to dogsit! Dogs are as important to Sarah as walking is to me. So with our three dogs – collies Fen and Cal and another Pod called Lark – Sarah is in her element, as she has five dogs to look after.

But I am not quite in my element. My favourite type of walking – as my walking friends know – is hillwalking. I probably won't be venturing onto any big hills until the spring, and I won't be walking up any hills until the snow and ice, which has been around for a good month, shifts. The only hill I have been up so far is 1,302 ft Ben Bhraggie, just outside Golspie, which I went up shortly before the temperatures took a dive. Even our local hill – the 557 ft Tain Hill – is iced over right now, and trying to make any kind of progress is quite treacherous. Sarah and I ventured onto its lower paths, at Aldie Burn, a few days ago and it was like trying to walk on an ice rink. The only way I could negotiate some parts of the walk was to get down on my hands and knees (as shown in one of the pictures here – *see next page*).



The view from Ben Bhraggie

But there is plenty of lower level walking to enjoy, and the beaches here must be among the best in Scotland. They are absolutely fantastic, with miles and miles of good firm sand. We also have Tarbat Ness about 17 miles from here. Tarbat Ness, with its lighthouse, is on the tip of a peninsula where Dornoch Firth meets Moray Firth, and it's a wonderful wild spot, with extensive views across those two firths. Walking from Tain to Tarbat Ness is the longest walk I have done here so far, mainly following the beaches, and it was thoroughly enjoyable. Probably my favourite place (so far) is Loch Fleet – a serene, peaceful spot where you can see the seals. I went there on a 10-mile walk from Embo, with collie Cal. The sun was out and it was quite magical.



Loch Fleet – “my favourite place (so far)”

I have joined the Friends of John O'Groats Trail, which is 147 miles long and starts in Inverness, and which I plan to walk (in sections – not in one go) when Covid restrictions start to ease. I have done some footpath clearing on part of the trail near Embo with Jay Wilson, who is chair of the Friends. Jay is a very interesting guy who comes from West Virginia. He came over to the UK to walk from Land's End to John O'Groats – and he ended up founding the John O'Groats Trail, and now has dual US/UK

citizenship. While we were path clearing, Jay told me he believes Donald Trump is so deranged he is going to set himself up as an alternative President, backed by some of his supporters, which is a very scary prospect.

Of course, I had been really looking forward to going on walks with North West Grampian LDWA and meeting people in my new group, but there are no walks at the moment. Julie Cribb – Group Chair, currently the LDWA's Local Groups Secretary and about to replace David Morgan as National Chair – has asked me to join the committees of North West Grampian Group and of the Speyside 100, which is due to take place in 2024. I have, of course, accepted, but let me make one thing perfectly clear. I will be helping on the event – when I look forward to seeing several of my Kent friends – and will be walking the route in sections, but NOT in one go, as my Hundred days are over. I had been planning to go on a walk and talk with Julie yesterday, but the snow put paid to that, so we will do that some other time soon.

I have also joined the Inverness Ramblers who – like North West Grampian LDWA – are not walking at the moment because of Covid. It's frustrating for us all, so let's all hope that Covid restrictions can be eased before long to enable group walks to take place all over the country.

As people know, another of my great loves is football, and I am afraid that I have not brought much luck to my new team, Ross County, because shortly after I arrived, they went to the bottom of the Scottish Premiership, and their manager was sacked. They are now on the up – and second bottom. Look out, Rangers!

I also take more than a passing interest in a much less important (!) issue: politics (when you work as a newspaper editor, as I did, it kind of goes with the job). A POSTCARD FROM SCOTLAND is probably not a good forum to air any political views, so all I will say that it is already clear to me that politics up here are no longer about left or right, but Yes (to Independence) or No. I have no doubt that another referendum on independence is coming, but I do think the result will be very close. A year ago someone else with an interest in politics, a certain Dover District Councillor called Peter Jull (who also happens to be Kent LDWA's Treasurer and Social Walks Secretary) bet me £10 that there would not be another independence referendum in Scotland. Sorry Pete, I reckon my money is safe – and I'm going to donate your tenner to the SSPCA.

I won't say any more on that issue, so I will end this POSTCARD FROM SCOTLAND now. I hope it is of interest, and that you enjoy the photos.

Wishing you all happy walking (and let's hope group walks can restart sooner rather than later) – and stay safe.

With best wishes from (at the moment) cold but always beautiful Scotland.



POSTSCRIPT, 29TH MARCH 2021

All is well here. I'm missing my Kent friends, but it's good to be nearer one of our daughters, the scenery is marvellous, and we have found local people friendly and welcoming. It's very interesting politically up here, of course. I suspect the fallout from the Salmond affair will prevent Nicola Sturgeon from getting a mandate for another independence referendum at the Scottish elections in May. So, I may have to cough up a tenner to Peter after all!

The big piece of news for the Smith family is that our other daughter – the one down under – gave birth to a boy named Roclan Cameron McMaster last Wednesday, so I am a grandad now. Roclan – whose Glasgow-born and bred father is already calling Rocky – is half English and half Scottish. His dad says he can support England at cricket but he will support Scotland at football ... but, of course, he will grow up an Aussie and will support Australia at everything, as he should.

Graham on his hands and knees at Aldie Burn “as watched by two of our dogs, Lark and Cal – obviously wondering why I hadn't tried that form of movement before”

Editor's Note – Lark and Cal are in the wider picture provided by Graham, BUT they had wisely decided to keep their (social) distance!

HILL, MOUNT, DOWNE TO THE BOTTOM & BACK

David Thornton

I'm not going to deny that I felt rather chuffed with myself when I spotted the opportunity to give this walk its name, whilst casting a keen eye over a couple of local OS maps and stumbling across the place names of Crockenhill, which was the start point, Badgers Mount, Downe and returning via Pratts Bottom.

It was **November 1st** and the clocks had gone forward the week before, so at 23 miles we were likely to be flirting with the loss of daylight. Unfortunately, this wasn't helped by a 30-minute delay at the start, caused when one of those joining the group had, what can only be described as a significant navigational hiccup, charging clockwise around the M25, past Clacket Lane into Surrey, before making a rapid U-turn at jct 6.

The weather was set a bit drizzly and overcast for the first couple of hours, which was a shame, as this took us through the back end of the Darenth Valley, which would have offered some really fine views. However, we were fortunate that the rain stopped for the day and the sun peeked through just before we paused for a quick tea break at the Shoreham Crown, one of my favourite stopping points (*see photograph on the front page*). Here, a few of us tucked into a slice of some rather lovely birthday cake, which Nicola Foad had very kindly offered to bake and bring along to the walk. Sarah Turner and I share the same birthday on 11th October and, whilst the offer was three weeks on, quite frankly I would never turn down the prospect of one of Nicola's cakes. On many social walks I've listened in on one of Nicola's mobile cake making seminars and I can assure you that the end product tastes every bit as good as it sounds.

From the Shoreham Crown we turned inwards towards London, passing through Badgers Mount, Halstead and around Downe House (home of Charles Dickens, of which I was ashamedly unaware) before stopping for a lunch break in Downe village. This was the first social walk I have led where a drink hasn't been taken in a pub, but whilst that was a shame, it meant we could crack on fairly sharpish and make up for some of the time lost at the beginning of the day. The afternoon stint took in a very short stretch of the London Loop path, through a section of High Elms Park and on towards Pratts Bottom. From here the route circled through Chelsfield Golf Course and village, before a sneaky back route into Crockenhill gave us a glimpse of the lit high-rise buildings of central London and Canary Wharf, just as daylight was rapidly disappearing. Being the last walk before tier 4 lockdown, the "goodbyes" around the cars were a kind of strange "Well, I'll see you when I see you, whenever that turns out to be". I'm writing this on Saturday 20th March and we're still waiting. Like all of you who really enjoy our social walks, hopefully that wait will soon be over.

DYMCHURCH TO DIDCOT, ANYONE?

Andy Clark

Have you ever thought of walking from Dymchurch to Didcot? Probably not, but now you can, as a new long distance path has recently been added to the LDP database; the ***Dymchurch to Didcot Robust Ramble*** stretches for over 220 miles from the south east corner of Kent, passing through Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire before finishing at journey's end in Oxfordshire.



The route has been created by Colin Bridge, the Local Footpaths Officer for the Ramblers in Thanet and a new LDWA member (*welcome Colin!*), and follows minor footpaths wherever possible.

One of the benefits of this route is that Colin has drawn up 48 individual sections and includes an alternative return route for each section, making it possible to undertake the sections as a daisy-chain series of day walks, with minimal route overlap.

Although the LDWA website only shows the east-west option, Colin's accompanying website includes comprehensive route descriptions and sketch maps which cover both directions.

The Kent part of the walk passes through Newchurch and Hamstreet before heading to Appledore. It then goes towards Tenterden and Rolvenden before reaching Sandhurst and crossing the border shortly afterwards into East Sussex.

Colin has already created a previous Robust Ramble which is on the LDWA website and runs from **Dover to Dorking**. He has used a similar principle of creating sections with alternative return routes. Again, his website contains comprehensive route descriptions.

Online Links

Dymchurch to Didcot Robust Ramble -

https://ldwa.org.uk/ldp/members/show_path.php?menu_type=S&path_name=Dymchurch+to+Didcot+Robust+Ramble

Dorking to Dover Robust Ramble -

https://ldwa.org.uk/ldp/members/show_path.php?menu_type=S&path_name=Dover+to+Dorking+Robust+Ramble

Colin's Website - <http://www.robustrambles.co.uk/>

WHICH WAY IS NORTH?

Jim Briggs

Easy question for any walker...

Today there are electronic alternatives to the traditional compass. However, none of these common electronic devices were ever built to be a compass as their primary function. I have been suspicious of some of them and of my old compass, so I tried a simple experiment with two compasses, two Garmin GPS units and two iPhones.

I first tried everything without calibrating the electronic units. I did check the magnetic declination – it is about 0.5 degrees East at the moment in Kent, so not worth correcting. The results are below:

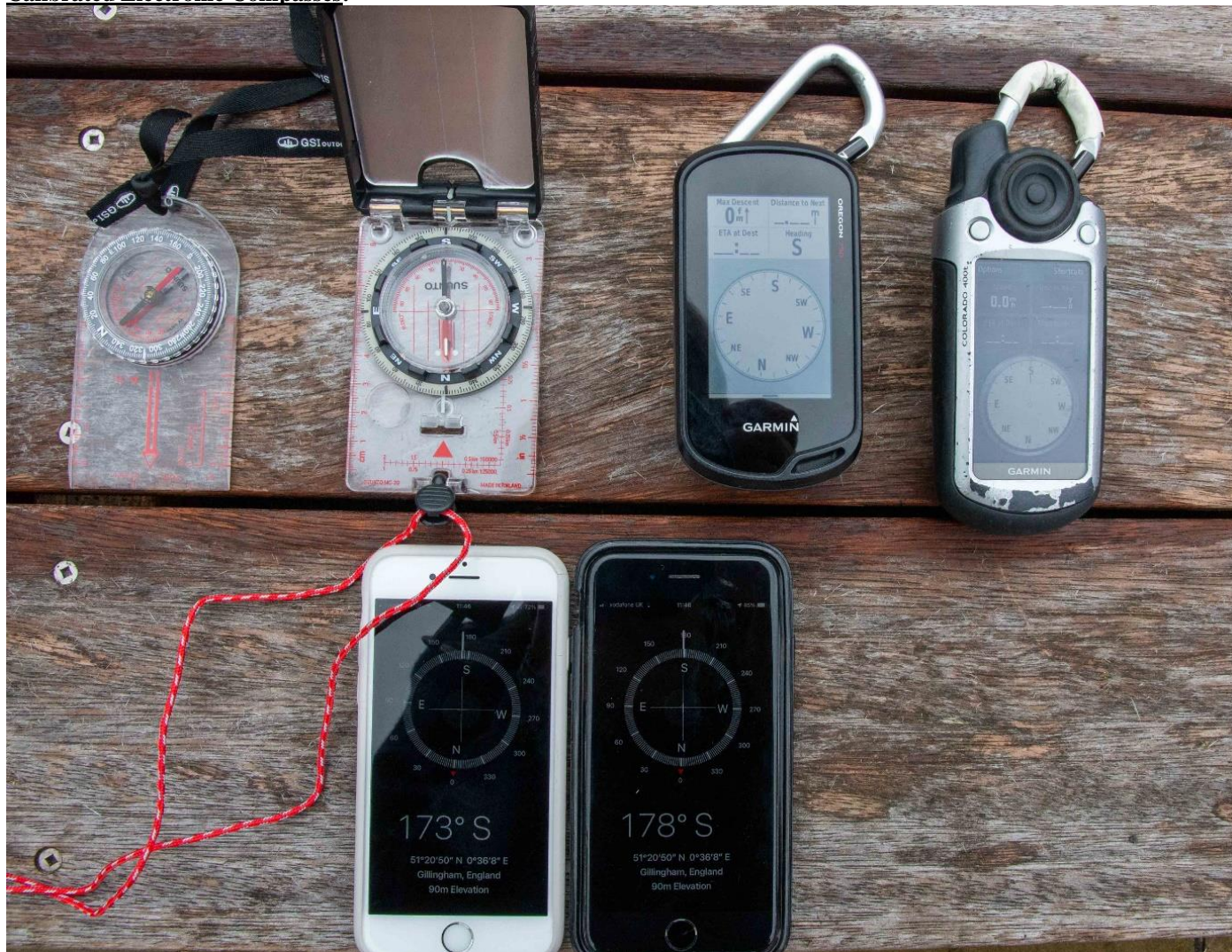
Uncalibrated Electronic Compasses:



Nothing quite agreed. My old Garmin GPS was off by about 180 degrees and the two iPhones differ by almost 10 degrees. A big word of caution on my old compass... yes, I knew it had flipped North and South. Apparently, it must have been too close to magnetic fields from electronic gear at some point in its life and for a few years now, North has been South and vice versa. I could not explain why it was still quite different to the other compass and also wildly wrong. After some experimenting, I found that although I had chosen a location well-away from known lumps of metal, it was near the rill in the garden. Moving the compass away from this 25 metre long stretch of water gave a much better reading on my old compass (provided I remembered it was 180 degrees out).

As this initial experiment is unfair and the manufacturers of the electronics all say you should calibrate the compass before use, I followed the on-screen instructions for the two GPS units on how to calibrate. Discovering the calibration procedure for phones is harder, but some of the internet articles (the source of all truth in the world... perhaps) suggest the same procedure as the GPS, i.e. turning slowly held flat 360 degrees and then rolling and flipping. The post calibration readings are:

Calibrated Electronic Compasses:



Results are much better. The old GPS is now pointing the right way and differences between all the different methods is down to around 10 degrees. So, applying the *one in sixty rule* for navigational error, we could be a mile out after walking six miles. Hopefully, we hit a landmark to correct our navigation before then...

I note Apple have a disclaimer on their compass and location ability that seems fair: "The accuracy of the compass can be affected by magnetic or environmental interference; even the magnets in the iPhone EarPods can cause a deviation. Use the digital compass only for basic navigation assistance. Don't rely on it to determine precise location, proximity, distance, or direction." It could be all my devices were upsetting each other. A fairer test might have been to carry out the experiment one at a time.

My conclusions from this:

- Always check your compass before you start. It is possible to flip a magnetic compass and some electronic ones can be wildly out unless calibrated.
- Keep away from metal, power lines, railway lines and even linear stretches of water, which can all throw traditional compasses off. Best recheck the bearing after walking a short distance.
- The sort of compasses we have are not perfect and best to keep checking bearings and the location on a map.

PS any questions regarding this article should be addressed to Jim – and not to the Newsletter Editor!

SNIPPETS / DID YOU HEAR?

(or useless / irrelevant material, depending upon your point of view)

The following material has all been sourced by the Editor, and is based upon untold hours studying the finer details of the world-wide ether for stories which may, or may not, have a link to walking, but which all seemed to be of interest; they are all, as far as I am aware, true, and are offered here without comment. Apologies to any sad individuals (like me!) who are aware of them all.

PS Anybody desperate for one or more of the 'full' articles that follow should contact the Newsletter Editor

CHINA AND NEPAL AGREE ON NEW HEIGHT FOR EVEREST

(December 2020) China and Nepal have jointly announced a new height for Mount Everest, ending a discrepancy between the two nations; the new official height is **8,848.86 metres (29,032ft)**, China's official Xinhua News Agency said. This is slightly more than Nepal's previous measurement, **86cm taller** than had been previously officially calculated, and about **four metres (13ft) higher** than China's. The new height was agreed upon after the two countries sent surveyors from their respective sides of the mountain in 2019 and 2020; there had been debate over the actual height of the peak amid concern that it might have shrunk after a major earthquake in 2015.

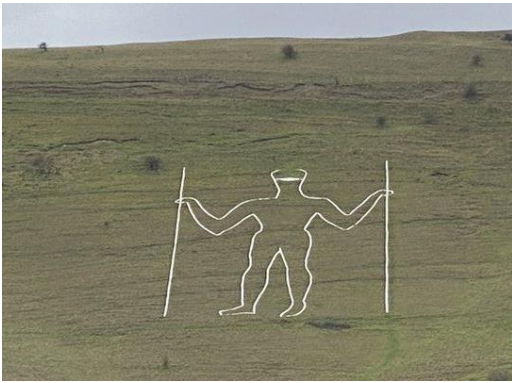
AIR PRESSURE MAKES MOUNT EVEREST 'SHRINK' BY THOUSANDS OF FEET, NEW STUDY FINDS

(December 20) Mount Everest is the tallest mountain in the world — but sometimes, it feels like the second-tallest, according to a story reported in the American Geophysical Union's news blog Eos. That's because the mountain's air pressure fluctuates significantly throughout the year, a recent study found, causing the summit's "perceived elevation" to occasionally dip below that of its less-lofty rival, K2 — the second-tallest mountain in the world. "Sometimes K2 is higher than Everest," lead study author Tom Matthews, a climate scientist at Loughborough University in the United Kingdom, told Eos.

WOMAN LEFT RED-FACED AFTER CONFUSING AIRCRAFT CARRIER WITH MONARCH

(March 2021) Police Scotland tweet: 'Please be advised that for the duration that the HMS Queen Elizabeth is visiting Glen Mallan, no aircraft are allowed to fly within three nautical miles of the ship and below 6,000ft within the three nautical mile radius.' SNP supporter Kerry Newton took to Twitter to question why the Queen was allowed into Scotland given current coronavirus lockdown restrictions. 'Why is the Queen visiting anywhere during the pandemic? Can I visit Aberdeen or Cheltenham?' Many were quick to pick up on Kerry's mistake, with the UK defence journal official account asking 'Are you a 65,000 tonne Royal Navy aircraft carrier?' Another Twitter user pointed out: 'As a military vessel, it can go where it likes during Lockdown only constraint is that the water is deep enough.'

THE LONG MAN OF WILMINGTON – NOW COVID COMPLIANT!



(January 2021) The Long Man of Wilmington, said to date back to 1710, now has a mask; the 72m (235foot) tall chalk figure had a mask painted across its face in an act branded as "unacceptable". The addition of the face covering to the Long Man of Wilmington, a protected archaeological site, was discovered on Tuesday, Sussex Police said. The force said the landmark near Polegate had been defaced by vandals. Sgt Tom Carter said that while it "may have been perpetrated for humour...the actions that have been taken are unacceptable".

WHY IS WALES USED AS A UNIT OF MEASUREMENT?

(January 2021) When you think of Wales, what comes to mind? Land of song? Rugby? Or a useful tool for measuring everything from de-forestation to the destruction caused by nuclear bombs? The chances are that you've heard someone say – or read in an article – that something is "**the size of Wales**", perhaps most recently with reports about the A-68 iceberg since it broke away from the Larsen C ice shelf in Antarctica in 2017, and was heading for South Georgia. "The giant block is estimated to cover an area of roughly 6,000 sq km; that's about a quarter the size of Wales," a BBC report at the time read.

While not definitive, "about the size of Wales" first shows up in texts in 1844 and peaked in popularity in 1949. However, we suspect that not even the most ardent patriot could tell you how big Wales is, so why has it become such a convenient yardstick? Answer: People in general find it easier to appreciate the size of geographical features when they are related to other known features, than when they are presented in units of, say square km. *PS So how big is the Land of My Fathers? It's about 8,194 sq miles (21,224 sq km) - or 2,122,400 hectares. Put simply, your typical rugby pitch is about one hectare, give or take.*

MAN ACCIDENTALLY INVITED FOR COVID VACCINE

(February 2021) An otherwise healthy 32 year old journalist from Liverpool received an early invite for his covid-19 vaccination. Not wanting to feel that he was bucking the system, he telephoned his GP, to be told that he was considered extremely vulnerable, as his BMI (Body Mass Index) came in at 28,000 (yes, twenty eight thousand)! – *a BMI of just 40 (forty) classifies one as morbidly obese*. Ah, the error was soon spotted – his height had been incorrectly input in his GP's records as just 6.2cm!

DOG WALKERS WEARING BODYCAMS WHILE TAKING THEIR PETS OUT AMID RISING FEARS OVER THEFTS

(March 2021) Dog walkers are now wearing body cameras while taking their pets out for a walk in the countryside amid growing fears over thefts. Demand for different breeds of dogs has skyrocketed during lockdown and it is feared the trend is driving a rise in dog snatching by thieves trying to make a profit. Simon Bailey, the chief constable of Norfolk, revealed during an online rural crime briefing that he became the victim of dog theft in 2019; his pet was recovered. The police briefing was told that 52 dogs were stolen in Norfolk last year, with 16 being returned to their owners. Some owners had described being approached by strangers asking if their dog was for sale, while others reported suspected thieves blowing whistles to attract dogs on beaches. This has resulted in a tremendous amount of anxiety for some people, who are so worried about going out for a walk that they have even started wearing body cams.

FOREIGN SECRETARY'S ESTATE SPENDS £5M ON MOUNDS TO BLOCK OUT M25



The 20 & 30 mile Sevenoaks Circular has graced the approach to, and then past, Chevening House for the last few years – and may do so again, whilst one of the proposed routes for a Kent 2026 100 miler has an equally impressive view of the house and grounds (in daylight, of course)

(January 2021) The Foreign Secretary's grace and favour country estate is planning a £5million project to build 10-metre-high earth mounds on its land – to block out any view of the M25 motorway. Historic Chevening House in northern Kent, which was left to the nation and is now at Dominic Raab's disposal, wants to embark on a huge landscaping project which would take five years to complete. Near neighbours have criticised the scheme as 'unnecessary' and say their lives will be made a misery by up to 80 construction vehicles a day visiting the site. 'Why do they want to do this now when the M25 has been there for 40 years,' said one resident from the nearby village of Chipstead. 'I wouldn't mind if the public will benefit from all this work, but it is for one person who might use the house on the odd weekend.'

If you go down to the woods today EUROPEAN BISON TO BE INTRODUCED INTO KENT WOODLAND

The £1m project, led by Kent Wildlife Trust and the Wildwood Trust, is aimed at helping to restore Blean Woods near Canterbury, an ancient habitat; the wild herd of European bison, the continent's largest land mammal, will be brought in from Europe where they live in similar wild populations, by spring 2022.

SECULAR PILGRIMS: WHY ANCIENT TRAILS STILL PACK A SPIRITUAL PUNCH

(March 2021) The numbers are striking and puzzling in our secular, sceptical age when organised religion in the west is in steep decline. In the early 1980s, the annual tally of those walking the Camino, the thousand-year-old Christian pilgrim route from France to Santiago de Compostela in north-western Spain, had dropped to a few thousand at best. But by 2019, before Covid got in the way, the number had burgeoned to almost 350,000. And this countercultural, modern-day resurrection of pilgrimage is not just limited to the Camino. As we dare to start making holiday plans again, plenty of pilgrim paths and destinations offer a chance to step back and get a perspective on the trauma we have lived through these past 12 months.

JOHNSON URGED TO EXTEND PUBLIC'S RIGHT TO ROAM OVER ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE

(November 2020) More than 100 authors, musicians, actors and artists have written to Boris Johnson urging him to extend the public's right to roam over the English countryside to cover woodlands, rivers and green belt land. The letter, signed by leading figures from Stephen Fry to Jarvis Cocker, Sir Mark Rylance to Ali Smith, calls on the prime minister to give people greater access to nature to improve the public's physical and mental health. "Our love for nature resonates with our millions of fans and followers, but in England, it is actively discouraged by the law. This is not only unfair; it is also untenable." The authors point out that in England the public has "freedom to roam" over only 8% of the country, while "only 3% of rivers in England and Wales are legally accessible to kayakers, paddle-boarders and wild swimmers".

MAN AIMS FOR THE RECORD BOOKS AFTER WALKING CIRCUMFERENCE OF THE EARTH – IN LIMERICK

(October 2020) A retired business consultant, who has walked the equivalent of the circumference of the Earth within his neighbourhood, has encouraged others to keep active in the midst of the pandemic. Vinod Bajaj, 70, has walked 40,075 kilometres over the past four years without ever leaving his home city of Limerick in the west of Ireland. He has extolled the benefits of walking at such a stressful time for people. Mr Bajaj, who was born in India and has lived in Ireland for 43 years, finished his extraordinary feat in September 2020 after completing more than 54.6 million steps in 8,322 hours and burning almost 1.5 million calories in under 1,500 days.

DODGING BOMBSHELLS AND QUICKSAND ON BRITAIN'S DEADLIEST FOOTPATH

(With apologies to our friends in Essex, who may well know this)



(March 2021) It's said that The Broomway is the UK's most dangerous walking trail. Only accessible at low tide, this 6 mile offshore Essex path – or rather, non-path – is surrounded by cloud-soft quicksand and sprinkled with ordnance (the area has been a military testing ground since 1849).

It's quite literally a minefield!!

Zoom in on Google Maps, and you'll spot this improbable public right of way, not on the land, but in the blue of the sea, around 300m from the shore

(Editor - see extract here, map seems to imply that the PROW can be 'dang'hmm, I wonder what that could mean!)

Tom Bennett, an experienced mountain leader who likes to look for different ways of exploring the UK (his other guided tours include the Surrey Three Peaks by night) began to research The Broomway in 2019 – since the previous local guide had retired, there was no one regularly taking groups on the route.

MAN FINED AFTER WALKING 280 MILES TO CALM DOWN FOLLOWING ROW WITH WIFE DURING LOCKDOWN

(December 2020) An Italian man exasperated by an argument with his wife walked for 280 miles to calm down before being caught by police enforcing the country's strict lockdown. The unnamed 48-year-old reportedly hiked for a week in an attempt to soothe his anger after he had fallen out with his partner. He had walked from Como, in the far north of Italy, all the way to Fano, a small town on the Adriatic coast. At first police officers didn't believe he could have walked so far, but checking found his wife had indeed reported him as missing back in Como a week earlier. Reports in the Italian media say the man was cold and tired, but appeared lucid, although he admitted he had not realised quite how far he had gone during his long walk to clear his head. The man said he had been given food by strangers during his epic hike, during which he had averaged about 40 miles a day. "I'm fine, just a little tired," he told the officers. However, as well as picking up her husband's overnight hotel bill in Fano, **his poor wife was also told to pay the €400 fine** he had been given by police for breaching the Covid overnight curfew.

SEATTLE WOMAN, 90, WALKS 6 MILES THROUGH SNOW FOR VACCINE

(February 2021) A rare winter storm that dumped a foot of snow on Seattle couldn't keep a 90-year-old woman from her first appointment for the coronavirus vaccine. The Seattle Times reports that Fran Goldman walked six miles round trip to get her shot. "I have been calling to get an appointment anywhere, every morning, every afternoon and often I've been online at night," Goldman said. She finally secured a slot for Sunday morning, but Friday and Saturday a strong winter storm moved through the region, turning the city's normally rainy streets into a winter scene of snowdrifts. Goldman dressed in fleece pants and a short-sleeved shirt so that the nurse could get to her arm easily. Over that, she layered a fleece zip-up, then a down coat, then a rain jacket. She then put on snow boots, took out her walking sticks and ventured onto the snowy streets. "It was not easy going, it was challenging," she told the newspaper - but Goldman made it to her appointment, just 5 minutes late.

URBAN WALKS REPLACE RURAL STROLLS DURING PANDEMIC, DATA FROM ORDNANCE SURVEY SHOWS

(March 2021) Urban walks have replaced rural rambles during the pandemic according to new data from Ordnance Survey; city dwellers walked more than before the pandemic, and the greatest increase in local routes was around the largest urban conurbations such as Bristol, London (and the home counties) and Birmingham. Researchers from the map organisation used data from their app to work out where people were walking in January 2021 compared to January 2020. Fewer people walked in National Parks; the total walking routes within them reduced by 31.3% between the two time periods. The most heavily impacted were the Peak District where routes decreased by 74%, and the Lake District which dropped by 69%.

In 2020, walking hotspots included the Lake District, the Peak District, Dartmoor and the South Downs, but this radically shifted in 2021, with hotspots including Cardiff, Bristol and London. While people walked more frequently, the length of walk decreased compared to 2020. British people walked the equivalent of approximately 56 times around the UK coastline in January 2021, compared with 32 times in January 2020.

SLOW WALKERS MAY BE MORE LIKELY TO DIE FROM COVID-19, STUDY SUGGESTS

(March 2021) People who walk slowly may be almost four times more likely to die from coronavirus, and be potentially more than twice at risk of contracting severe Covid-19, researchers say. Those who walk slowly and are a normal weight could be almost 2.5 times more likely to develop severe Covid-19 and 3.75 times more likely to die from the virus than normal-weight fast walkers, according to a new study. *Slow walking was considered to be at a speed of less than three miles per hour, steady/average speed was three to four miles per hour, or brisk at more than four miles per hour.* The study of 412,596 middle-aged UK Biobank participants examined the relative association of body mass index (BMI) and self-reported walking pace with the risk of contracting severe Covid-19 and mortality.

And that's about your lot for this edition, so we'll finish (overleaf) on a slightly lighter note.

HOT-AIR BALLOON (with apologies to anyone who feels that they are in "Management"!)

submitted by Keith Warman

The Chief Executive Officer of a National Mapping Agency was travelling in a hot-air balloon and was lost. He reduced altitude and spotted a man on the ground below. "Excuse me" he shouted. "Can you help me? I promised to meet a friend an hour ago, but I am lost." *The man on the ground replied, "You are at an elevation of 9.30 metres above ground level, 67.30 metres above mean sea level (Ordnance Datum Newlyn) and at Ordnance Survey National Grid reference SK 60615 09074. You may have satellite positioning equipment in your basket, which will show your position as latitude N52°49'33.5", longitude W01°06'17.6" and altitude 64.3 metres on the WGS84 Geoid."*

The man in the balloon replied, "You must be an Ordnance Survey surveyor!" "Yes, I am!" said the man on the ground. "How did you know?" "Well," said the man in the balloon, "Everything you have told me is technically correct and no doubt extremely accurate. However, I have no idea what to make of your information, and the fact is that I am still lost. Frankly, you have been no use to me whatsoever!" *The man on the ground retorted, "You must be in management!"* "I am," said the man in the balloon, "But how did you know that?" *"Well," said the man on the ground, "You don't know where you are, how you got here or where you are going. You have risen to where you are due to a large quantity of hot air. You have made an unattainable promise which you have no idea how to keep, and you expect those below you to solve your problems. The fact is that you are in exactly the same position as you were before we met, but somehow it's now all my fault!"*

These last two articles, at least one of which is true, have what I feel is a common theme; I'm sure you'll get to the bottom of the connection before too long!

The first article, **Memories of Lockdown**, was spotted in that well known publication, the **Hurst Green News** (er, that's Hurst Green as in near the A25 at Oxted, Surrey, and not Hurst Green as in the A21 near Flimwell in East Sussex – though I have no doubt that they, too, have an excellent Newsletter!).

This was written by **Michael Harman**, a long-standing LDWA member, and known to quite a few Kent 'oldies' – and it does also mention long walks, so I'm perfectly entitled to include it!

The second article is actually a reprint from an earlier Kent Newsletter – well, it made me chuckle! The article is titled **Basic Bathroom**

Memories of Lockdown: We all have different memories of lockdown. Some will have been shielding and not ventured out. Some will have used all that extra time to volunteer, picked up new skills and made new friends. Others will have been on the front line or been doing the key work we all relied on. As a regular swimmer my abiding memory is of the battle to maintain some modicum of fitness after the pools were closed. I tried long walks but unsurprisingly they took too long. Then I tried cycling but there was a problem with my bike which meant that the front wheel was reluctant to turn and so, after an epic cross country ride with an average speed of just over 5 miles an hour, I was relieved when swimming was again permitted.



However, at first this was only if you were prepared to swim somewhere like a reservoir in Forest Row or a disused sand pit in Godstone, neither of which is heated. So a wetsuit is called for. Normally not a problem. However, my wetsuit will not do up without assistance from a kind passer by just before I get into the water. Unfortunately with social distancing in place, such assistance was strictly forbidden and so the wetsuit had to be put on at home where someone in my bubble could do me up and then I had to drive from Oxted to Forest Row fully kitted up, which I learnt was a good way to lose weight but just about do-able in the heat if you open all the windows of the car and keep moving. But I suppose my most distinctive memory of lockdown came when my household assistant announced she had to go out at lunchtime and I wasn't due to leave the house until 5pm. So if asked what my most distinctive memory of lockdown is, it will be the hot sunny afternoon I spent at work writing emails and dealing with colleagues and clients by phone whilst sitting at my desk fully zipped up in neoprene. *Michael Harman*

A VERY fussy and proper lady began planning a week's camping holiday for her and her Baptist Church group. She wrote to a campsite for reservations. She wanted to make sure that the campsite was fully equipped and modern, but somehow couldn't quite bring herself to write the word 'toilet' in her letter. So, she decided on the extremely old-fashioned term 'bathroom commode'. Once written down, it didn't look right and she was still not comfortable with it. Finally, she decided on the abbreviation 'B.C.' and wrote "Does your campsite have its own B.C.?" When the campsite owner received the letter, he couldn't work out what she meant by B.C. He showed it to several of the campers, one of whom suggested the lady was obviously referring to a Baptist Church since there was a letterhead on the paper, which referred to a Baptist Church. So he sent his reply:-
"Dear Madam,
"The B.C. is located nine miles from the campsite in a beautiful grove of trees. I admit it is quite a distance if you are in the habit of going regularly. No doubt you will be pleased to know that it will seat 350 people at one time, and it is open on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday of each week.
"Some people like to take their lunch and make a day of it. It may interest you to know that my daughter met her husband there. We are also having fund-raising to purchase new seats, as the old ones have holes in them. Unfortunately, my wife is ill and has not been able to attend regularly. It's been a good six months since she last went. It pains her very much not to be able to go more often. As we grow older, it seems to be more of an effort, especially in cold weather. Perhaps I could accompany you the first time you go, sit with you, and introduce you to all the other people who will be there.
"I look forward to your visit. We offer you a very friendly campsite."