

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION — Kent Group

furthering the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking

NEWSLETTER



Team Barandaw, near Canterbury
Andy, Barbara and Dawn – on an early Loop



But where could Alan be – surely not in Wales?

Virtual Y 100 Sir Fynwy – Kent Members' Special



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www.ldwa.org.uk/kent

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A WARM WELCOME to the August 2021 edition of the Kent Group Newsletter, especially to any new members, and an apology from the Editor for the delay in this being issued – must do better next time.

You won't need reminding that Covid remains a fluid situation, with ever-changing (and often baffling) Government guidelines, restrictions and u-turns – and there will undoubtedly be many changes still before we can be back to what may come to pass as normal; equally, *we* must be aware of any additional restrictions that the LDWA adds.

Currently, and as from 14th July 2021, and in brief, **in addition to government guidance, there are NO Covid-19 restrictions applied to Social Walks or Challenge Events by the LDWA**, at least for those in England.

(However) **Social Walk** leaders and walkers, as well as **Challenge Event** organisers and entrants, must continue to exercise caution and take personal responsibility for complying with government guidance, whilst all walk leaders or organisers must be cognisant of Covid guidance published by the Government. In all cases, walkers must not attend LDWA Group / Social Walks or Challenge Events if they or a close contact have recently been diagnosed with or show any Covid-19 symptoms, are awaiting test results or are self-isolating under current Government guidance.

Group / Social Walks

- A. Risk Assessments are no longer mandatory but are considered good practice and therefore encouraged.
- B. No longer restricted in number – BUT the leader may impose his / her own restrictions.
- C. Registers are **required** for Insurance and any Covid-19 Government legislation purposes – whilst advance registration is now not required, it makes sense to continue with this procedure, as this is much easier than taking names on the day.

Challenge Events

- A. Organisers must communicate to entrants to ensure all covid arrangements are clear.
- B. A formal Risk Assessment is still required to ensure the smooth and safe running of an event.
- C. Only LDWA members may enter the numerous **Anytime** Challenge Events (*Kent currently has none of these*), but ...
- D. (Actual) Challenge Events can accept non-members.

Before you do any Kent Group / Social Walk or Event, and re-iterating what I said in the April Newsletter, please **always refer to the LDWA and Kent Group websites for current information**, to see whether any restrictions apply. And for those doing a Group / Social Walk, it is generally best to come prepared with your own food and a supply of drink.

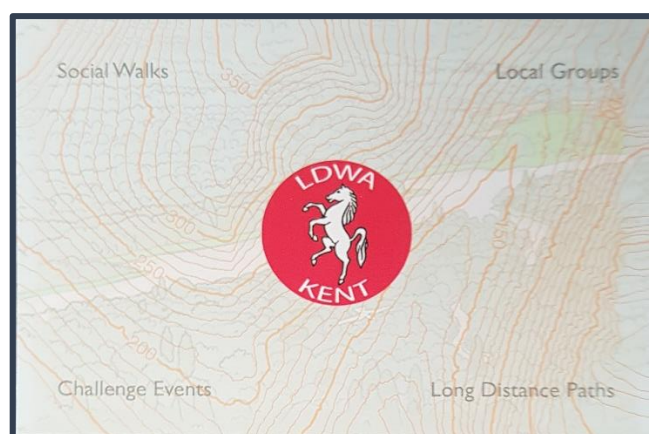
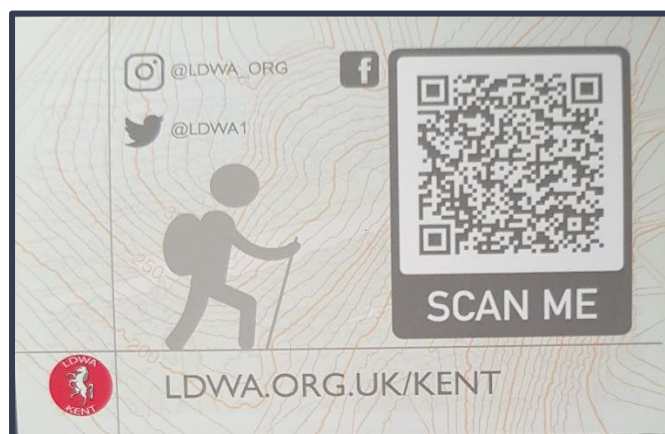
Covid is retreating; the Delta variant is threatening to run amok in some areas of the world; the Gamma variant is not yet a major risk but could become so; similarly, the Lambda and other variants. You can go on a foreign holiday, but there may be 'issues' on leaving or returning (Covid checks, self-isolating, quarantining, airport queues). The UK will experience a 'third wave' starting in September (*headline seen recently*). One day, hopefully soon, all will become – and be – clear.

As a result, many matters are still in a state of flux, but what I think we can all be certain of is that outdoor activities (in particular, those not involving jumping on others' backs and general group kissing) are surely amongst the safest of pastimes. On a separate front, however, the world generally seems to be having wilder weather in many different regions – (flash) floods, glaciers melting, droughts, heatwaves, icy spells, greater volcanic activity, raging wildfires, you name it, it has happened somewhere, seemingly on a greater scale than anytime recently, and often simultaneously. Climate change, it would appear, is here to stay and will have a large impact on our lives. Although perhaps not directly impacting on LDWA activities, yet, I feel that it is incumbent upon us all to be very concerned, especially for future generations.

On a slightly lighter note (*phew!*) – the monthly Kent Group **Committee Meetings** have continued, via the airwaves (Teams / Zoom), and it is envisaged that this will remain the *modus operandi* for at least the foreseeable future. The July Committee Meeting agreed that – if possible – the **2022 Annual General Meeting** will be held, wait for it, 'in person', at a venue yet to be confirmed (probably on Sunday 30th January). By the same token, it was agreed that there will be a return of the popular '**Xmas meal**' (also referred to as the '**Family Meal**') in 2021. This will be on **Sunday 12th December at Etchinghill Golf Club**. More details will follow in due course. Note that this assumes there are no further Covid restrictions etc.

A few extracts from the July 28th Committee meeting (*not covered elsewhere in this Newsletter*) – with the next meeting 25th August.

- A 'Welcome to Kent Group' introductory 'letter' is being finalised – to go via email to all new members.
- Kent Group 'business cards' are now available, see below.
- As confirmed in the recent *Strider*, Kent has been awarded the 2026 100 – more details in due course.
- Ideas are invited for how we (in Kent) should celebrate the LDWA's 50th (see also April *Strider*, page 5) – please send your thoughts to Andy Clark (andyclarkwalks@gmail.com) by the 15th of September. One possibility mooted is for a 50 mile walk (but probably not an event *per se*, as other groups will likely be doing similar).



As mentioned in the August Kent Communication, Julia Warman (National Membership Secretary) is in the process of compiling a 'Cookery Book' as part of the LDWA's 50th celebrations, so if you have a favourite recipe or a snack that you take with you when walking events, please email a picture and recipe to membership@ldwa.org.uk by 31 December 2021.

As all will hopefully be aware, Kent Group's **Andredsweald** event took place successfully on 11th July (ie before restrictions were fully lifted) and a brief report appears later. My thanks to Stephanie, Helen, Peter and Michael (Headley) in particular for getting this event up and running, from the drawing board to fruition in just over a month, all whilst under the ongoing spectre of Covid.

Following the successful staging of the Andredsweald, Challenge Events generally are beginning to poke their heads above ground, although some are understandably still being cancelled. Of particular importance, of course, is our own White Cliffs Challenge this coming Bank Holiday Saturday; nearby we have the 50 mile Surrey Tops (18th / 19th September), forming part of the KSS Triple Challenge (completion of the Surrey Tops, White Cliffs 50 and Sussex Stride (50), usually in consecutive years).

Nicola Foad, who has close links with the White Cliffs Walking Festival, has kindly agreed to assist Stephanie, Helen and Peter (main organiser) in putting on the **White Cliffs Challenge**, on Saturday 28th August, when we hope that regulations will permit actual food to be served at the end of what is always a gruelling walk, as well as hot drinks both before and afterwards. Note, though, that there **will** be a staggered start – Peter, anticipating that some Covid restrictions would still be in place, had arranged routes that cross a road early on. There are 2 distances, 16 and 30 miles, and entries are now being taken via SIE. The Marshals Walk took place on 15th August, so the verified Route descriptions should be available on our website soon. Any offers of help, please, to Peter at walks.kent@ldwa.org.uk.

Group / Social Walks are continuing, with these being subject to last-minute changes (as with other LDWA Groups). In Kent the next one is on Sunday (22nd August), 22 miles from Staffhurst Woods, near Edenbridge, snappily entitled 'HPH 7.5/8.5'. With the White Cliffs Challenge on Saturday 28th, this means that next up is currently Jim Briggs with his 'Art & Pizza' Walk on Sunday 19th September (*please note, date changed from 5th*). However, on Sunday 12th September, Peter Jull is going slightly 'off piste' by leading a 20 mile route from Crowborough to Cowden (and return) as part of the **High Weald Walking Festival** (bookings open / details available for this Festival from 9th August, Festival itself is 11th to 19th September – walks of varying lengths). Peter is calling this walk 'HPH 5'. As already mentioned, please keep checking the website for details of future walks.

The Kent Group Committee (and the LDWA generally) is keen to be involved with Walking Festivals, as we see this as an ideal introduction to the LDWA for the many millions who have never heard of us, but who could potentially benefit.

Anybody wishing to lead a Group / Social Walk, or having close contacts with other local Walking Festivals, please contact Peter, on walks.kent@ldwa.org.uk if he is not already aware.

KENT GROUP COMMITTEE

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As ever, thank you to those 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 cannot promise always to include everything, but will try (*though, due to space constraints, some current articles have been deferred until December 2021*)

As with my first attempt, in April, any errors, omissions and inconsistencies in this edition are mine – all mine! Two people at least, let's just call them Brian and Bryan, spotted the 'deliberate' mistake in the last edition when we erroneously assigned Charles Dickens to Downe House, when of course it was a certain Darwin, same first name, who lived there. And any comments are owned by the Editor and do not necessarily represent the views of the wider Kent Group Committee.

No, I'm not trying to start a 'Cupid's Corner' or anything of that ilk, but can you identify the lady in question (perhaps it's you)?

"I am John XXXXX, LDWA member 3XXX (joined in the early 80s), and would like to make amends to one of your lady members, who I met yesterday (Sunday April 18th), on a rural road, while we were walking in opposite directions on the Sussex Border Path, just north of Horsted Keynes. She was in the company of a non-LDWA couple, while I was on my own. We chatted for a bit as we both appreciate and are walking/exploring the Kent/Sussex countryside. While she got my 'name and number', I was my usual antisocial self, and it did not then occur to me to reciprocate and swap contact details before we parted. She was in London when she joined the LDWA, about 5 years ago, but didn't like the urban-ish walks and moved to Sevenoaks. I think she's been on several Kent Group Walks but, like me, finds being in big groups of people less to her taste.

She had short, straightish, silver hair, is 5'6"-ish and slim, no walking sticks, small rucksack, no glasses – she had a 'foreign accent' (perhaps a non-latin European), and facially has one of the looks that suggests an east European / Dutch background. Age – I'm not good with assessing age at the best of times, and she has a youthful complexion, so age is even more difficult to assess – could be anywhere from 40 upwards."

Please contact the Editor if you know who this lady is, thanks.

I make no bones about 'going big' with **The Virtual Y Hundred Sir Fynwy** in this Newsletter as, believe me, all the stories are different and, I hope you will agree, interesting; what an enterprising lot we all is! Accordingly, there is precious little room remaining in this Newsletter for much else, so a couple of articles have been held over until the December edition.

Finally, and on a sadder note, we were recently informed, via his daughter, that **Terry John Owen** (Member 21250) has passed away. The Kent Group would like to offer its deepest sympathy to his family.

*Stop Press: We have just been notified that **Martyn Greaves**, a long-standing Sussex Group member (in fact, their inaugural Group Secretary) and ultra-marathoner, including particularly in the USA, sadly passed away on 26th July, at the tender age of 65. He will be remembered very well by many Kent members; all told, he completed 40 LDWA 100s, his last being 2017. There will be a funeral service on 2nd September at Worthing Crematorium. Obituary likely in December's Strider. RIP Martyn.*

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

Neil Higham, Newsletter Editor, 17th August 2021

CHALLENGE EVENTS

The **White Cliffs Challenge** is mentioned elsewhere, whilst it is far too early to talk about Summer 2022 (especially bearing in mind that any 50th celebration may come first).

In connection with the **2022 Sevenoaks Circular**, organiser David Thornton has this to say:

'The 2022 Sevenoaks Circular is set to take place on Sunday 20th March, with the Marshals event on Sunday 6th March. Options of 32, 22 and 17 miles will be available, all of which will start from West Heath School. New routes have been put together for all three distances, with the longest route heading out towards Stansted and Eynsford, before turning back via the Darent Valley. The date seems a long way off, but no doubt it will come round very quickly and hopefully something we can look forward to staging.' *The date may well be a long way off, but a prospective entrant enquired on 13th June; entries, via SIE, will likely open in November 21.*

Andredsweald – 11th July 2021

Was it really only 5 or so weeks ago? A lot has flowed under the proverbial bridge since then.

As confirmed elsewhere, a report will appear in December's *Strider* – special call out to **Eric Rolfe** for providing both the photos and some commentary. Eric's photos capture the emotions well. There are some 50 photos on the Kent Group website, showing both countryside and mask wearers (at the venue and at the checkpoints); this will (hopefully) serve as a good reminder of the conditions that we were forced to work (walk) under.

This was the very first LDWA actual – as opposed to Anytime – Challenge event held in the UK since March 2020, after what seemed like a lifetime of isolating and solitary walking. And we proved that it could be done, although most people would have preferred the opportunity – at least at the end – to socialise over a welcoming cuppa and some food. Whilst we were able to proceed, I feel that, if Covid restrictions are re-imposed, then any events held over the winter months will perhaps be restricted to the most battle-hardened of warriors (though that phrase might describe LDWA members generally).

As many will have seen, and purely because of Covid, we went with the 'tried and tested' venue and route from 2019, so 'all' we had to worry about was Covid ... Whilst the quantum of entrants was a slightly disappointing 79 – with 64 starting, 62 finishing – the quality of those that turned up was 'top notch', and it was certainly good to see many familiar faces again. We had been unsure whether there would be pent-up demand, particularly from newer members, but this was not really in evidence. Thanks go to the entrants, who all abided by the regulations, for braving the event, and for their many appreciative comments afterwards.

Thanks, of course, to all of the Marshals – most of whom were ‘field based’, only, and didn’t venture to HQ – for their valuable time, as the event could not have happened without them. Also thanks to the 8 who ventured out into the High Weald on 4th July to ‘prove’ the routes; some very useful suggestions made, and most incorporated into the final Route Description, with Stephanie and Helen having done a ‘leaflet drop’ a couple of weeks earlier.

Marshals, in no specific order: David Thornton, Andy Clark, Penny Southern, Michael Headley, Alan Stewart, Cathy Waters, Jim Briggs, Nicola Foad, John Gilbert, Dale Moorhouse, Eve Richards and Andrew Melling plus Jane Bates and Rob Foster on loan from LDWA Sussex. Organising Committee consisted of Stephanie Le Men, Helen Franklin, Peter Jull and Neil Higham

ALAN STEWART – 10 Q & A

Having introduced our very own **10 Q & A** in Newsletter 114, our next ‘victim’ is Alan Stewart, of whom much more elsewhere in this edition

1. **How did you hear about the organisation, and when did you join?** I met Neil Higham around 1999, when he was working at one of my customers, and we got talking about walking (that rhymes). He told me that he and a friend had just completed a continuous 100 mile walk; at the time I thought that was totally insane and incomprehensible. I joined in 2004 after a Kent Group Social walk – someone on the walk, probably Graham Smith, said it was about time I joined.
2. **Where was your first social (or challenge) walk, and any other memories of this day?** The Smugglers from Goudhurst, I walked the last half with Ann Sayer; initially, I hadn’t a clue who she was, until Graham Smith congratulated her at the next checkpoint on her MBE! When I heard her story, I was in awe – and realised why I was having trouble keeping up with her.
3. **What is your favourite social walk or challenge event distances, and why, and who do you walk LDWA events with most often (if anybody)?** Challenge event distance would be any one I could finish within time. Social walks – I enjoy the Kent Group Night Walk. On events, I walk a lot with Elaine Oddie of Essex & Herts, we are a similar pace and have become good friends.
4. **What is the best piece of kit that you have owned that cannot be replaced?** I can’t think of anything that couldn’t be replaced, unless my flat feet combined with my custom made Orthotics count, I would be useless without them!
5. **When walking a Hundred, what have been your highest and lowest moments?** High point, **walking upright** into the finish to that wonderful applause, it always moves me to tears. Low point, when I realise that I am not going to finish.
6. **What would your perfect walk look like / be?** A long distance walk with Hilary over several days, taking it easy, enjoying our surroundings, Pub lunches and lovely B&Bs.
7. **What is the strangest sight you have seen on an LDWA walk?** Upwards of 500 people walking the 100 miles. Or the Painted Dogs at Port Lympne Wild Animal Park, regarding me as their lunch (*see later*).
8. **What is the best piece of walking advice you have received?** Wrapping my Toes in Animal Wool to help prevent blisters, I normally get them on my big toes. That was advice from Ann Sayer when I walked with her.
9. **What is your favourite (non-Kent) walking area?** Sussex has some great areas, South Downs, Ashdown Forest, High Weald and it is local. Further afield, if I had to choose one, Northumberland.
10. **What do you think is the best thing about the LDWA, and what does your partner/family think of the LDWA?** Best thing is the lovely people – Hilary said it has transformed our holidays as we have a two week holiday discovering lovely areas around the 100 (and we have met some lovely people).

Brief Letter from Scotland (Graham Smith, recent Kent Chair)

‘... had been seriously thinking about coming down to help on the White Cliffs Challenge, and the WCWF, but have reluctantly decided not to badly sprained Achilles, three weeks into a 12-week period of rest and stretching exercises most frustrating, as hate being inactive, have had to bite the bullet on this. (We all wish Graham a full and speedy recovery; there is a chance that Graham and Sarah will be down over Christmas / New Year, so don’t be too surprised if he turns up on a Group Walk – Ed)

I went down to the Isle of Wight for Jill Green’s 80th birthday walk last month (*see bonus report from Jill, later*). Only did seven of the 50 miles (I was part of the back-up team after dropping out) and that probably didn’t do my Achilles any good (particularly as there was a short walk the previous day which I went on).

A huge well done on the Andredsweald. I was delighted (and a very proud former group chairman) when I heard it had taken place, as it was a courageous decision for it to go ahead. A report and photos will be in the December *Strider*. And I am sure the WCC will be another success. I will be thinking of you all.’

THE 2021 VIRTUAL Y 100 SIR FYNWY (VY100SF in short)

As you will no doubt have seen in the April *Strider*, this was generally a successful event, with numerous tales told of derring-do, including from Alan Stewart (page 34), Jill Green (page 35) and Don Newman (page 38).

What didn't quite make it into *Strider*, but is in the VY100SF Report on the LDWA website, is that 430 started out on their respective journeys, and only 198 (ie just 46%) achieved the full distance, including 9 from Kent. A further 194 (representing 45% of the field), including 9 from Kent, completed a distance of over 50 miles, whilst the remaining 38 (ie the residual 9%) – none from Kent – completed a lesser distance. The number of completions is thus well down on previous, 'normal', years. I feel sure that the official 100s Recorder – Keith Warman – will provide a more detailed analysis, and perhaps explanation, and I understand from him that this is scheduled to appear in next April's *Strider*.

For the record, and in no particular order, Kent's Happy Hundreders were: **Tony Barter; John Cook; Jill Green; Andy Gordon, Barbara Hutton & Dawn Jones; Judy Rickwood; Don Arthurs; Keith Warman**

whilst the 'Also Rans' comprised: **Steve Russell & Paul McAuliffe; Andrew Boulden; Marshall Elliott; Don Newman; Peter Jull (&) Penny Southern; Alan Stewart; Neil Higham**

Whilst **all** the completions and near misses are laudable, pride of place amongst Kent members on this occasion must, I feel, be shared between **Team Barandaw** and **Alan Stewart** – the former for both competing in and completing their very first 100, and Alan for his dogged determination to keep going even after the 48 hours was up; honourable mentions must also go to Don Newman (85 miles, and would surely have reached his ton), to Keith Warman on completing his 30th and to Penny Southern who also embarked on her first 100 (after Jull's cajoling). Apologies to anyone else who feels that they merited greater prominence.

As I recall, the weather was generally good – there was very, very, slight drizzle where I was – although a little too hot on the Saturday and Sunday afternoons for some. But no snow or heatwave or floods ,,,,,. Some, but by no means all, saw a bright moon on the Saturday and/or Sunday early hours, though this would not have been of practical assistance.

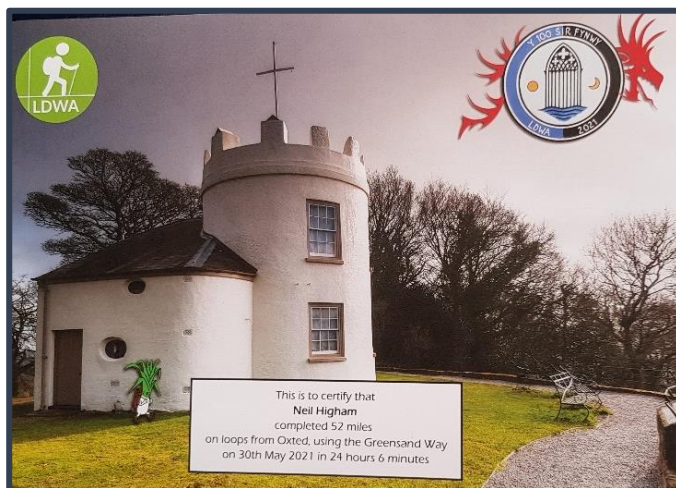
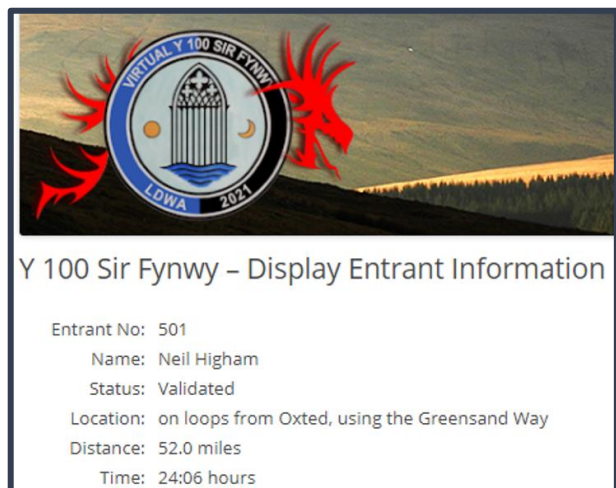
I requested something from all entrants and almost all have obliged. Nothing 'flashy' was required, and I suggested that the more reticent could provide information in bullet point format (I actually wrote that there was '*no need to channel your inner William Shakespeare or Jane Austen*'). However, none took up the bullet point offer – so I decided that I would show them how it is done (having walked the least, my output is deservedly at the back of the field). Rather strangely, perhaps, and I wasn't expecting this, the most loquacious of all our VY100SF contributors were the two headliners mentioned above, although this is not to imply that one can accurately plot 'miles walked' versus 'words written' along a straight line; nor, incidentally, will weight of words secure prominence! Anyway, thanks to all the contributors – and, having read the stories, I am full of admiration for, and salute, you all; secretly, I am also rather envious I think that there are many good ideas provided here for future solo or small group walks.

And a lot of praise – and thanks – must go to the many who volunteered their time to provide assistance to many of our eventers, with one or two helping out at various times and in various places (and at least two were also spotted on Saturday's Group Walk) – see 'The Final Word', on page 25. As mentioned in *Strider*, grateful thanks must also go to the verifiers etc, from the VY100SF Organising Committee, in many cases having to 'work' with unfamiliar countryside / maps.

Two themes which I picked up when reading these stories – one is that it is too easy, if one is not careful, to lose time without the normal checkpoints and fellow entrants to chivvy one along; secondly, cattle in fields can seriously affect one's journey.

Before we get to the various tales, a word of commiseration to Jan and Neal O'Rourke who failed to make it to the starting line. I understand that they had planned on doing the Millennium Marshals 100 route (ie starting at Wye) but, sadly, injury problems hampered them at just the wrong time.

Shown below (left) is an example of how an entrant could check, on-line, whether their effort had been accepted, or else was still being verified Also shown is a recently received Certificate of one's achievement; whilst the text on the Certificate is bespoke, unless perhaps one walked with others, the (universal) background photo is of the chapel at the top of Kymin, a short/sharp hill that would have been ascended just after Monmouth on the 'proper' route.



ALAN STEWART – 90+ MILES, OFFICIALLY (100 + for the walk)



As reported in his local newspaper:

New Eltham man raises £2,700 for charity by walking 100 miles non-stop after open heart surgery

A New Eltham man who had open heart surgery last year has completed a 100-mile non-stop walk – without sleep for 54 hours – to raise funds for a heart charity. Alan Stewart, 72, raised more than £2,700 for the British Heart Foundation (BHF) with his double-marathon effort; he was motivated to take on the challenge after being diagnosed with a heart valve disease in January 2020.

Mr Stewart, from Charldane Road, first learnt that he had a problem with his heart during a long-distance walk. He said: 'I was walking up a steep hill and I felt like I had no energy. I was really struggling which is unusual for me. I got to the top and I was bent over double trying to catch my breath. I went on a few more miles, but I knew something wasn't right. I went to A&E and after a series of tests they diagnosed me with heart valve disease. The news just came out of the blue as I always thought I was fit. It really shook my confidence. After the diagnosis I was waking up with pains in my chest and I was worried if I going to make it to the morning.'

Aortic stenosis is a disease of the heart valve and restricts the flow of oxygenated blood to the body. The condition puts an extra strain on the heart as it is required to pump harder to force blood past the diseased valve. In August last year, Mr Stewart had open heart surgery to replace the faulty valve and one of his coronary arteries. He said: 'Before the operation I was very apprehensive, even scared. It's a big operation and makes you put your affairs in order. My recovery was a long process. After the operation I could not even lift a kettle to make a cup of tea. The first walk I took outside was just to the end of my road, but I had to have long rest before I could make it back home. Over the next few months, I gradually built-up my stamina by aiming to walk to the next lamppost. Eventually, I was able to walk around the block. My aim was always to get back to doing the long-distance walking that I love.'

After completing his recovery and restoring his fitness, Mr Stewart decided to take on a 100-mile challenge to raise funds for the BHF. His route took him from Hastings to Dover along countryside and coastal pathways in Kent and Sussex. He stopped to rest during the walk, but he did not sleep.

And Alan's story in his own words:

100 yards to 100 miles – from open heart surgery to my Virtual Y 100 Sir Fynwy

It was the morning of **20th August 2020**, Hilary and I went out for a walk. For me it was slow, painful and tiring; I managed around 100 yards to the end of my road and needed to sit down on a garden wall to rest and recover before attempting the return. It was my first full day at home after open heart surgery to fit a new Aortic Valve inside my heart and a bypass to the main artery that feeds the heart. I was still in a lot of pain and discomfort and not allowed to even lift the kettle to make a cup of tea. Fortunately my partner of 26 years, Hilary, with whom I live 'apart together', had come to stay to look after me (unfortunately I couldn't persuade her to wear the nurses uniform). The hospital had advised me as part of my recovery to keep doing what I love, walking. We went out again in the afternoon to repeat the same walk.

And so my recovery started. The next morning, we went to the end of the road and onto the next lamp post, rested and then back home and repeated in the afternoon. The next day the next lamp post and so on, until I could make it to the local shop and buy a Cadburys Twirl as a reward, which I am not strictly allowed, but what the heck I deserved it. We continued walking twice a day and lamp post by lamp post, gradually increasing the distance until I could walk around the block, which was no mean feat as the outward journey was uphill.

My goal was to build up to 20 miles by January 2021 to go on the Kent Group night walk led by Dave Sheldrake. This would have been full circle, as it was on the 2020 night walk that my heart condition first came to light, causing me to cut the walk short and

eventually ending up in A&E. Unfortunately, as we know, because of Covid, the 2021 night walk, as with others, was cancelled.

My ultimate goal, which Hilary thought at the time was insane, was the 2021 100. I particularly wanted to go for it to raise funds for The British Heart Foundation (BHF), which, due to the pandemic, has had to cut funding for research by 50%.

I continued to build up walking mileage following previous social and challenge walk routes, culminating in the 30 mile Sevenoaks Circular.

I decided to enter the VY100SF, and chose to follow the 2018 Cinque Ports 100 route, mainly for the reasons Peter Jull detailed – ‘a route passing a high number of locations where replenishment food and liquid can be purchased, a high number of public toilets and good public transport links back to the start’. It is also reasonably local and a very lovely route. I didn’t fancy doing loops from home as it would have meant walking the mean streets of South London, sometimes at night. I had planned to do the walk unsupported but, to be honest, not relishing the night sections on my own, when Elaine Oddie of Essex & Herts offered to walk with me from Tenterden to Dymchurch and from Dover to the finish, I jumped at the suggestion. This proved to be a life saver, and, without Elaine, I doubt I would have finished.

29th May 2021 – After a hearty breakfast at the Premier Inn in Hastings, I made my way to the start at the Sussex Coast College, next to the main railway station in Hastings, original start of the Cinque Ports 100. I arrived at 8:30am to give myself time to make a short video about the reason for me taking on the challenge to raise funds for the BHF, and to post it on the VY100SF Facebook page and other social media. However, being a novice in these areas, it took me six attempts and nearly the full 30 minutes to get it right, just in time to take a selfie outside the college at 9am as proof of my start time. Unfortunately for some reason the college name came out back to front in the picture, it looked like some obscure Welsh place name.

I set off for a stroll along the prom, the weather perfect, although forecast to heat up as the day went on. The sea looked inviting for a lovely swim, but alas no time if I was going to make the finish in 48 hours. Next came those steps, lots of steps, lots of steep steps, lots and lots of steep steps up to Hastings Country Park, but the view from the top across Hastings and along the coast was stunning on such a fine day. Next came the roller coaster (appropriate for a seaside town) walk along the coast with some very steep ups and downs, but rewarded with stunning views along the coast in both directions and taking plenty of pictures along the way – which later proved my undoing (more about that later).

With the exertion and the weather hotting up, I needed to stop and shed some layers. Whilst in the process, a couple with their dog came by and we got chatting. They asked me how far I was walking. When I told them I was walking 100 miles, I got the standard reply ‘and where are you staying tonight?’ After explaining nowhere, it’s a continuous walk and that I was doing it for BHF, they said they would donate and took a picture of the banner attached to my rucksack. They also told me they had met two people ahead who were doing the same walk, which I assume was Steve Russell and Paul McAuliffe, however, I never caught up with them. It turned out that the male had also had heart problems, so after swapping gory heart stories we departed. I did get a donation from them and the dog – there are a lot of lovely people (and dogs) in this world. I continued the roller coaster until it eventually flattened out towards Pett Level.

Arriving at Pett Level, 6.9 miles and Checkpoint 1 – with a Marquee on the original event, but no Marquee now, just some grass, albeit nice grass – I took a timed picture of said grass to prove I had been there. I continued alongside the Royal Military Canal, encountering a flock of sheep being herded along the track to fresh pastures of grass, more nice grass. After a mile or so I headed off uphill towards the lovely town of Winchelsea, where I took my first rest on a bench between the church and the pub. I spent some time, too much time as it proved, trying to upload my pictures to social media. I had a chat with a passing old couple who asked what I was doing, and yes, you’ve guessed it. Eventually resisted the pull of the pub and continued on to Checkpoint 2, Rye.

Crossing flat fields towards Rye that were once sea, wishing it was still sea so I could have got a ferry to save my legs, I arrived at the quayside in Rye around 2:15pm. In lieu of the Rye Checkpoint, I stopped at a cafe for a relaxing coffee and sandwich in the shade, as it was getting very hot now. It was all going swimmingly, or so I thought! The cafe was very busy and the service was slow. By the time I paid the bill and checked the time, I thought ‘oh dear me’ (or words to that effect), I am over an hour behind schedule and I have only gone just over 12 miles. All that picture taking and novice social media posting had cost me, so I thought ‘stuff that for a game of soldiers’ and immediately headed for the actual checkpoint at Rye Community Centre. I took another back to front selfie outside, with an obscure Welsh name – will I master this selfie business by the end of the 100? Probably not.

My next problem was that I was low on water – do you think I could find water on the route through Rye? No. I needed to wander off route to find some, costing me more time – it was all going pear shaped. Having topped up my water, I headed out of town.

It was the hottest part of the day and I picked up the pace, hoping to make up some time heading towards Wittersham; this eventually proved to be a bad idea. At the section where the route description said ‘*Thru kg and churchyard (280°) to go thru further kg*’, I went through the wrong kissing gate, eventually finding the correct one. ‘*Flw path (320°) across crop-fld*’ – there was no path – ‘*for 200yds (aim 15yds to L of further power pole, flwng white-painted stakes if present)*’ stakes not present, I went wrong here and lost more time. There followed lots of large fields with no discernible footpaths, so I was constantly walking on a compass bearing and double checking the map. Not so much nice grass around this area.

I eventually arrived at Checkpoint 3, Wittersham, 19 miles, around 5:14pm, suffering with the heat and longing for the shade of the Village Hall and the welcome and encouragement of the marshals. No, wake up Alan, this is not the main event, there are no marshals and the hall is closed. I took another back to front selfie with a funny Welsh sounding name (*see front cover!*), and pushed on to Tenterden, where I was looking forward to meeting Elaine.

Heading across more open fields, with no shade but lovely countryside and nicer grass on the High Weald Landscape Trail, I finally found some shade in the trees around the National Trust’s Smallhythe Place, but it didn’t last. I was soon on a long track

beside a huge field, around the end of the field and down the other side of a field to find a footbridge and gate in the hedge that I nearly missed. In the next field I encountered a herd of cows, calves and a big, huge, ginormous, massive bull, but fortunately he deemed this hot, struggling mad old so-and-so too insignificant to bother with, and left me in peace.

It was about this time that Elaine rang me to see how long it would be before I reached Tenterden, and asked if I wanted fish and chips. Well normally that would have been enough for me to break into a run, but the pace and the heat were getting to me and my stomach was starting to make me feel queasy – but what the heck, just the look and smell of the fish, chips, salt and vinegar would be enough to give me a boost. I was about 30 minutes away and said I would call her when I was about 10 minutes from Tenterden, which I did. I reached Tenterden around 7:15pm and went into the cool of the air conditioned Waitrose (heaven) to buy a litre of lovely cold water. Then off to Checkpoint 4, St Mildred's Hall, 25.2 miles for another back to front selfie – will I get this right before the end of the walk? I doubt it. I found a shady seat in the churchyard and waited for Elaine and those fish and chips.



I was really pleased to see Elaine and looking forward to her company walking through the night to Dymchurch. I didn't do the fish and chips justice, lovely as they were, perfectly cooked chips, crispy on the outside and soft on the inside, as my stomach wasn't feeling great. I will make up for it when I am in better fettle.

After a well-earned rest and a change of socks, we set off for Appledore as the clock struck 20:00. We hoped to make up some time because the weather forecast for the night was good, and the route was almost flat for the next 25 miles. It soon became clear after about half a mile that the 2018 route description was now a little out of date; the first path on 'LHS of field', what field, where had all the grass gone? It was now a new housing estate, but at least it was walkable! Now headed for the stand alone Chapel Bank, rising some 30 meters above the Marsh. There used to be a church on top, but as it was some way from habitation, it was demolished, and in 1858 the new church was opened in Ebony. We were diverted through the much overgrown cemetery where, among others, the actor Donald Sinden is buried, although you would have a problem finding his grave.

We reached Checkpoint 5, Appledore, 31.5 miles at 10:42pm (manned by Essex & Herts in 2018, alas none of Elaine's friends there to greet us now) to find that it is fenced off, about to be demolished. Elaine took a picture of me by the sign so it was the right way round. We have now left the world of obscure Welsh names.

After a short rest on the benches outside the pub, we set off across Romney Marsh heading for Lydd, crossing many large fields of shoulder-high rape drenched with dew, with barely definable paths, often no definable path. We were soon drenched to the skin. There were alternating fields of potatoes ('fields of doom' as pronounced in the original 2018 100), at one point the path was so overgrown we had to find an alternative route, it was slow going. Our usual experience in previous Hundreds is that 400-plus people have walked along the paths before we get there, but on this virtual event we only knew of 2 people who were in front, and they hadn't done a very good job of trampling down the crops. About 2 miles out of Appledore the route goes over a level crossing on the Ashford to Hastings railway line. Although it was nearly midnight and not a soul about when we reached it, guess what, yes we were held up by a train. (I think they call that sod's law).

We reached Checkpoint 6, Lydd, 41.5 miles at 3:42am on Sunday. We had a very early breakfast of hard-boiled eggs and lukewarm tea from Elaine's flask on the village green, before setting off for New Romney as the birds woke up around us. The only vehicles around were police cars (we saw several, but none stopped to ask what we were doing), as we passed the entrance to Lydd Airport, now a Covid vaccination centre. The footpath sign at the start of the path to New Romney has been replaced since 2018, but the footpath itself was very overgrown (surprise, surprise) as it led us to the inevitable potato field (surprise, surprise) and drainage ditch. The going seemed to be getting easier, I think the daylight helped.

We arrived at Checkpoint 7, New Romney, 44.7 miles at 5:22am and Elaine took a right way round picture. It was then on to Dymchurch, via Littlestone, and we picked up the sea wall for the next 3 miles to Dymchurch. It was a lovely morning, albeit with a cold wind off the sea. We arrived at Checkpoint 8, Dymchurch, 49.2 miles at 7am. Elaine took another right way round picture at the Village Hall. We desperately needed the loo but they were closed, so we were eyeing up the area behind the Village Hall when a car entered the otherwise deserted car park and parked right next to us. 'Oh bother', or words to that effect. So we headed for the only bench in Dymchurch that was *not* in the teeth of the cold wind on the sea wall, for a much needed rest, when a woman got there before us. 'Oh bother' again. We lurked menacingly and she eventually left, and we got the bench to ourselves for a short rest. It was about this time that my phone rang; it was a very worried Hilary, asking me what was wrong and was I OK, as apparently my Tracker thought I was stationary too long and had set off the SOS, silly Tracker! After reassuring her, and updating her on my progress, it was time to set off for Hythe.

It was just before 08:00 and time for Elaine to bid me farewell and head to Dover for some well-earned sleep. Her company, conversation and navigation skills made a difficult night's walking the best it could be. I was looking forward to seeing her again in another 12 hours. I set off on my own into the wide expanses of Romney Marsh, and contemplated the day ahead.

After a long walk along The Royal Military Canal I met a leaning Andrew Boulden (which was to afflict me also, later in my walk) coming the other way with two other people doing their own route of the VY100SF. I believe they had about 20 miles to go to my just short of 50 – they were clearly faster than me, but then most people are ... (*Alan – Andrew started three hours earlier than you, so no need to beat yourself up here – Ed*). I turned left and climbed a steep, narrow, rutted, winding, in parts muddy path that seemed to go on for eternity, heading towards Lympne Castle; it also went along the boundary of Port Lympne Wild Animal

Park. About halfway up, while I was puffing and panting and cursing in the heat, the hedge on the left opened up to reveal the enclosure of a pack of what I later found out were Painted Dogs, Africa's most successful predator, with a kill rate of 90%. The whole pack stood there, staring at me with ears pricked, teeth bared and drooling. I am sure they were thinking 'Look lads, lunch has come early'. As I didn't want to be part of the 90% statistic, I suddenly found a faster pace. A bit further up I came across the Giraffe enclosure. They were looking over the fence at me, but they did make me smile with their big eyes and fluttering eyelashes, I am sure one of them fancied me. I eventually reached the top at Lympne Castle and continued along roads and across fields towards Hythe. It was now becoming quite hot, feet were sore and I was feeling very nauseous. I think that with the little I had been able to eat, and with the water I was regularly sipping just sitting there, not digesting, I was feeling rotten. I found a corner of a field and was extremely sick – after which I felt a lot better and pushed on into Hythe, reaching Checkpoint 9, Hythe Sports Pavilion, 58.1 miles at around 11:30am. This was the breakfast stop on the 2018 event, but sadly no breakfast for me (though it would have probably revisited me anyway). I had given up on the back to front selfies and just took a picture of the Pavilion hoping the validation team would recognise it.

I found a shady spot under a tree and attended to my sore blistered feet (probably not helped by the soaking they got on Saturday night through the dew-soaked rape fields). I managed a morsel of food and, after a good rest, I set off in search of water, before departing for Folkestone. (Do you think I could find any water en route? – No, this was like Rye all over again). I eventually wandered into Costa, where they kindly filled my water bladder for me, and then headed for Folkestone.

As lovely as the route is, I knew I wasn't going to enjoy the next 5.9 miles and 738ft of ascent in the hottest part of the day – and I didn't! Even the flat part along the prom from Sandgate I was finding unpleasant, with the heat reflecting off the concrete and the crowds of people. Boy, did I envy those swimming in the sea – tempting, but if I had succumbed to a lovely cooling, cold swim in the English Channel, that would have been me for the day, 100 over. Still the thought of it made me forget my sore feet and dodgy tum for a short while. I continued on to Checkpoint 10, St. Eanswythe's School, Folkestone, 64 miles arriving at 3:48pm. I took a picture of what I thought was the checkpoint, but it as it turned out it was just the railings and a metal gate – I'm no David Bailey that's for sure.

I was very hot and tired, and headed for the shade under a tree in the churchyard to cool down, rest and attempt a bite to eat. While I was there, a few people stopped to ask me about the BHF banner on my rucksack, and a couple took a picture and said they would donate. I don't know if they did, but there were a few anonymous donations on Just Giving.

My next Checkpoint would be Dover, some 8.7 miles and 1048 feet of ascent, another, for me, tough section. After traversing the very busy and buzzing Harbour area, it was up some steep steps at the start of a long uphill section, to the top of the North Downs. Just before the Caravan Site I had to make a decision, do I turn right down into the Warren as per the route description and eventually up the zigzag steps to the Café at the top of the cliff, or do I carry straight on up the very, very, steep path to the top of the Downs and go along the top to the Café (as I had heard earlier in the year that the former set of steps had been closed due to a subsidence). I chose the latter, and must admit that I uttered more than a few choice words while struggling up that path. I was eventually rewarded with a cool breeze and fabulous views along the top. When I arrived at the Café – which I was relying on to top up my water – it was closed, and the steps were open!

As there was nowhere about to get water, I decided to knock on someone's door to ask for some; it was still a very hot day and there were no shops between here and Dover. The kind lady who answered the door was probably more than a bit apprehensive when she saw me as, to put it mildly, I wasn't looking at my best. However, she filled my water bladder and promised to donate to the BHF, aren't people wonderful.

The route from here to Dover was up and down, with some road walking, fields, narrow enclosed paths, and numerous trip hazards. My stomach was getting worse, I was starting to lean and my lower back was becoming painful, so I popped some pain killers hoping they would stay down. I eventually descended steeply, on a tricky path, to reach the main road in Dover. The route would then cross the main road and take me up an almost vertical side road and on up to the Redoubt at Western Heights. The way I was feeling I couldn't face it and decided to follow the main road into Dover, looking forward to meeting Elaine here.

I arrived at Checkpoint 11, Maison Dieu House, 72.7 miles at around 8pm, and it was lovely to see Elaine sitting on the bench next to the checkpoint. I wasn't feeling good at all, and Elaine and I questioned the wisdom of going on, and I think had this been a normal 100 I think I may have given up at this point. However, as my main reason for attempting this year's 100 was to raise funds for the BHF, and for all the people who had kindly and generously donated so far, after a rest I decided to try and make it to the next checkpoint St Margaret's at Cliffe.

Elaine took a picture of me leaning outside the checkpoint (at least it was the right way round) and we set off for St Margaret's, 645 feet of ascent in just 4.9 miles, wonderful! Elaine stopped at a shop to buy me a can of Ginger Beer to help settle my tum, which it actually did for a while. We were soon climbing out of Dover up to the Castle and on to the Bleriot Memorial. We reached Langdon Cliffs above the bright lights of Dover Harbour as it was getting dark, on uphill past South Foreland Lighthouse in the dark and reaching Checkpoint 12, St Margaret's at Cliffe, 77.6 miles at around 11pm, and found a bench for a sit down, which I desperately needed. I found a hidden spot and said 'hello' again to everything I had eaten and drunk since Hythe. Feeling a little bit better after this and a short rest, Elaine took another leaning tower of Pisa picture outside the Checkpoint, and we set off for Deal, mercifully only 263 feet of ascent in 6 miles.

Just outside St Margaret's we lost a bit of time as the route on the ground didn't quite match the route description, we eventually got back on the route and headed on up some fields and saw off the 263 feet. I was feeling worse, my back pain and leans were getting worse, and I was slowing. Elaine was very patient and doing most of the navigation. We reached the seafront by Walmer Castle where the route description read '*(note distant view of the Isle of Thanet, known locally as Planet Thanet)*' we would have needed night vision goggles, I don't know about Planet Thanet, I hadn't a clue what planet I was on. There followed a long walk

along the deserted seafront into Deal and Checkpoint 13, Deal Town Hall, 83.6 miles at around 3:20am. I was getting closer, only just over 17 miles to go, however at that time it seemed like a mountain I couldn't climb.

After a sit down and a rest Elaine took a picture of me outside Deal Town Hall which, if nothing else, showed that I hadn't a clue what planet I was on. We set off for Sandwich as dawn broke and to the sound of the dawn chorus, this lifted my spirits for the 5.9 miles that lay ahead. Ahead of us lay 3.7 miles (plus extra for a diversion around Royal St George's Golf Club, due to The Open preparations) along the seafront with views across Sandwich Bay to Planet Thanet, which we could now see. It was a beautiful morning and the sun was just rising above the sea. Unfortunately, I wasn't fully appreciating it and had to stop and perform Pilates exercises on the gravel track in an attempt to relieve my back pain. This, and my slow speed, must have been very frustrating for Elaine, however she didn't show it, she was very patient and encouraging, and I was very glad she was there. Elaine suggested I lighten the load of my very heavy rucksack, so we dumped most of my food in a nearby litter bin (as I hadn't been eating anyway), and Elaine offered to carry the heavy Gimbal I had been using for selfies. The reduction in weight was a huge help for a while, until my back and tum made their presence felt again.

We arrived at Checkpoint 14, Sandwich Guildhall, 89.5 miles at around 7am and rested on a bench in the square. People started setting up market stalls around us which soon made us feel uncomfortable, and in the way – so, after the inevitable picture, we set off on the 4.7 miles to Northbourne. Only two more Checkpoints to go, I was getting closer with each painful step.

I usually walk with one walking pole to keep one hand free for the route description and map. Elaine suggested I change to two walking poles for better support as I was leaning quite badly, and I was happy to relinquish all the navigation to her – she was doing most of it anyway. As it was, it was all I could do to keep myself going, my back was extremely painful, I was going quite slowly and needed regular stops to bend and stretch in an effort to get some relief from the pain. It was at some point on the way to Northbourne that Elaine stopped to take a picture of me and reminded me it was 9am, exactly 48 hours from my start at Hastings. I had reached 92 miles, so an official 100 completion was not to be; however as long as I could put one foot in front of the other, no matter how bad I felt, I was determined to complete the 100. I felt I owed it to all the lovely people who had donated to the BHF, to the NHS for giving me back my life, and also to Elaine who had given her time and effort to help me through the two nights and now what was to prove to be most of Monday.



We reached Checkpoint 15, Northbourne, 94.2 miles at around 10am. After a rest, some Pilates exercises for my back and the obligatory photo outside Northbourne Parish Hall, we set off for the 3.7 miles and 269ft of ascent to Maydensole Farm. The weather was getting hot again, and later in this leg I was to lose my sense of humour in a big way and become Mr Grumpy. After about a mile or so we came across a field to a gap in the hedge with three wooden posts in the shape of a triangle. I said to Elaine I needed a sit down, and one of these posts seemed the ideal height – however, my bum was nowhere near the intended post and I went crashing down and was securely wedged in the triangle of posts. After realising I was OK, Elaine and I couldn't help laughing at my predicament. It took some time to extricate me from the posts, but at least it was a lighter moment and an enforced rest. Shortly afterwards we met a family out for a walk, and after a short chat they promised they would donate to the BHF, which I found out later they did.

We reached Sutton Court Farm where began 1.4 miles along a footpath at first extremely overgrown and between hedges. This is where I lost it, I was swearing and cursing – this was the last thing I needed in my state, my poles were getting tangled up, the path was very uneven. I tried walking without the poles but because of the leans I couldn't stay upright and fell over, landing on my back in the undergrowth, floundering like a tortoise rocking on his shell. I eventually got myself up and continued with one pole, cursing and muttering under my breath like Pa Bear. I fell over again, this time face down – and it was quite comfortable actually. I was happy for Elaine to just leave me there and let me drift off to sleep, however not an option, so we continued on what seemed to me to be the worst 1.4 miles of the whole walk. We eventually reached Checkpoint 16, Maydensole Farm, 97.9 Miles just before 1pm. I lay down in the shade for a short rest and to recover my sense of humour and composure, such as it was.

We set off on the final leg to the finish at the Duke of York's School in Dover. It was as far from a cruise home as England winning on penalties. Only 3.4 miles, but 325ft of ascent; it seemed like it was uphill all the way back. I was going very slowly, sticking one foot in front of the other and stopping a lot to get relief from

my painful back and to retch up hot acidic bile. It was while going up what seemed an endless uphill track, that I just bent over my walking poles and exclaimed to Elaine that I had had enough and couldn't go on, it was my lowest ebb. I soon realised of course that I couldn't give up now, I knew had to pick myself up and continue to the finish, and with Elaine's encouragement I did.

We arrived at the entrance to Duke of York's School, 101.3 miles, just after 3pm. 54 hours from the start and it had taken 6 hours to walk the last 9 miles. Elaine took a photo of me by the school sign and I reciprocated, but failed to notice she was holding up a sign saying 'WELL DONE' (photo above). How wonderful was that?

I can't remember how I felt at the finish, it wasn't the normal sense of achievement, elation and emotion I feel when greeted by that wonderful applause when you enter the hall at the finish of a normal 100. Was it an anti-climax or a sense of relief, I don't know, but I do know I owe a lot to Elaine for helping me to get there.

And after all that I had been through to get there, would I do it again? In a heartbeat.

Postscript – Alan was chuffed to receive an email (*abbreviated here*) from David Morgan, VY100SF (and former LDWA) Chair – 'The committee followed your progress and marvelled that you were undertaking such a walk after the heart surgery. We were willing you on in spirit as we knew that you were up against both the clock and your body's physical limits as you approached the last 10 miles. We were delighted [you] achieved your goal of walking 100 miles, and recognise the pride that you must have had as you finished to recognise this magnificent feat of physical endurance in the face of adversity, ... you [will] receive a certificate that shows you walked the full distance [although] the official results page and 100 database will show you as having retired at 92 miles Well done again Alan; a stunning feat of endurance that was so inspirational. '

TEAM BARANDAW – 100+ MILES

The journey began back in October 2019 when **BARBARA HUTTON**, **ANDY GORDON** and **DAWN JONES** met on a White Cliffs Ramblers walking holiday to Majorca. Andy had recently completed the Sussex Stride and was looking forward to taking on the Y Sir Fynwy 100-mile challenge to be held in 2020. Barbara and Dawn were full of admiration and a little disappointed that they would be unable to tackle such an adventure without a qualifying 50 under their belts. Barbara, Dawn (and Andy for good measure) hastily signed up for the 'Spring into Lakeland' challenge event for April 2020 in the hope that if there were still places available, they may be able to squeeze in to do the 100. But the pandemic struck and both events were put off until 2021. Oh well, undeterred, the plan was to still try for a 50 mile event, and the Bullock Smithy was pencilled into the diaries as indeed was The Tour de Trigs, an event not taking place until December so surely that would go ahead, surely the pandemic would not still be playing havoc with these events? As history unfolded, one challenge after another was postponed or cancelled. But out of the disappointments came the chance to tackle the VY100SF challenge without a qualifying 50 – what a result. The Tour de Trigs had needed them to form a team, and have a name, and that is how Team Barandaw came into being. Later they referred to themselves as the Barandaw Goats when they noticed they were all sporting Hoka One One Speedgoat footwear.



Taking on a 100-mile challenge as novices meant planning and training. Dawn's husband, Steve, was enlisted to support them around the route at various checkpoints. It did not take long to realise that an elongated or linear route would be a lot harder from a logistical basis, and so the decision was made to walk the Canterbury Outer Ring modified to 26 miles and do 4 loops, with the 4th loop being a bit shorter, which helped psychologically. Covid-19 restrictions meant the Team couldn't all walk together in the early training preparations. The route was recce'd and modified around areas considered dangerous to tackle in darkness, or when tired. Various day laps and a night lap were walked, finally culminating in a 60 mile day and night combination, which was the furthest any of the Team had walked before – and all came up against a bit of a wall with sleep deprivation. 4 main checkpoints were identified where supporters could park. The Team were offered more support from Keith, Barbara's husband, who took on the role of supporting Steve and keeping an eye on the trackers that were hired to see the Team's location, and John Gilbert, who has undertaken LDWA 100-mile challenges over the years, and nobly manned a couple of checkpoints at very unsociable hours. It should be mentioned here that Sarah Turner, also with a few 100-milers under her belt, made contact and offered valuable advice.

The day arrived and Team Barandaw was well prepared. Set off at 8am as planned, and the first Loop went without any hitches. Jacket potatoes at the lunch stop and a coffee and cake mid-afternoon. Barbara had already started to be aware her feet were uncomfortable. The second Loop included having a very pleasant meal at the Golden Lion, Broadoak, where the accommodating landlady was ready to put the food on the table as they arrived, with thanks to Steve and Keith giving her the heads up when the Team were 10 minutes away and food choices already made. So far, so good, the Team set off to walk through the night but with a welcome hot drink and plenty of snacks provided by John Gilbert

around 11:30pm. The night walk brought the extra challenge of long wet grass and soggy feet, this will be addressed with different footwear for any future 100 milers! The Team in their planning had walked the route at night but had dealt with sub-zero temperature and next to no grass – what a difference 4 weeks can make.

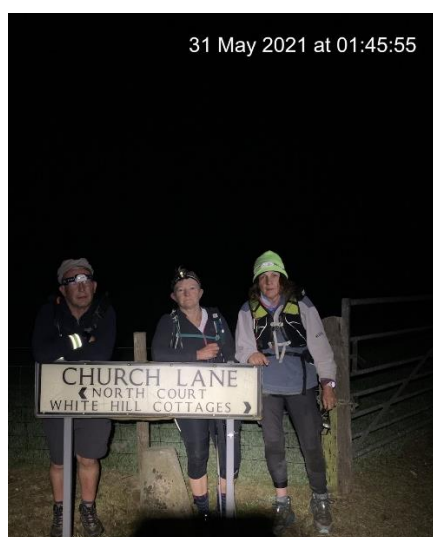
6am, an hour later than planned, Steve and Keith met the team and disappeared off to walk the dog, with instructions not to return for one hour, but to make sure the team were awake after an hour. This gave the team a chance to sleep in the van. In their planning, this was considered necessary – in reality, though, Andy snores, which fortunately both Dawn and Barbara saw the funny side of. The sun was shining, and the Team were ready for another day. 56 miles completed, over halfway and only at 23 hours! The Team were doing OK. Barbara's feet were giving her some problems, but she soldiered on. The next stop, only 4 miles along the route, was a superb breakfast, cooked in the field expertly by Steve and Keith. The rest of Loop 3 went without complications, but as it was ending and with less than a full Loop to go, Dawn thought she'd test the water and questioned why were they doing it? – what

was making them carry on? – did they need to? After all, they had clearly done enough to qualify for next year's 100 and it was only a badge! Well, even with Barbara's poorly feet, Dawn was put right in her place with a very emphatic chorus of 'we're not stopping now'. She hadn't meant to sound so serious – it was only posed as a question, but it was good to know they all still wanted to complete this challenge. A decision was made at this point, as they were running later than their original schedule, that they would have dinner in the next pub, so Keith and Steve were called to meet them.

The Team were now about to start Loop 4 – it was going to get dark again and head torches were sorted out, yet another change of socks – Gore-Tex lined footwear this time to deal with the wet grass for Dawn and waterproof socks for Barbara who'd had to resort to sandals to cope with the blisters. Andy's feet were doing remarkably well, and he swears it was down to the constant sock changing and the 'Udderly Smooth' cream he was using. The Team knew they had to dig deep now to get through the last 22 miles. Some family members who had been following the trackers, and realised the team were stationary at a pub close to where they were driving, paid a very welcome timely visit to cheer the team on. Dawn also took a phone call from her daughter who said 'Mum, we (me and the children) are going to meet you at your next check point – what time will you be there?' After a quick calculation, the Team set off with an extra bit of excitement, knowing that Dawn's family was travelling from over an hour away to be at the next checkpoint. Little did the Team know what awaited. Just before the checkpoint was a series of 4 fields. The 2nd of these had cattle in, which the Team had walked past 3 times already. *The account of the stampeding cattle is reproduced below.* This was a freaking scary experience, possibly made somewhat more heart wrenching for Dawn, who had her daughter and grandchildren attempting to enter the field from the other end of the footpath, whilst the cattle charged across the field. Thankfully with modern technology and a mobile signal, it was soon established that the family had made it safely out the field their end, but the Team were in the middle of the field being stared at by angry cattle looking ready to charge again. The Team turned around and Dawn and Barbara suddenly found enough energy to run Andy was more controlled with his exit from the field and thankfully they all got out in one piece. Now, with family that had travelled for an hour to see them, and a field of dangerous cattle between them, some quick re-routing had to happen. A permissive footpath leading to another footpath (albeit not well used) was followed, and eventually the meeting with the family took place.



We're really quite friendly



Second night, looking a bit glum?



.... but now happier with Jan and Jim

The Team now needed to get to one more important checkpoint, the last at 91 miles. Here the Team were met, along with Steve and Keith and hot drinks etc, by two very good friends, Jan Hartopp and Jim Cheney, who at the unearthly hour of midnight were willing to walk the last 10 miles and keep the spirits up. There was a surprising amount of chatting and good humour, and it was only as the Team approached the last couple of miles that they realised the trackers they had hired had not managed to record the walked distance. This knocked the team for six. Whilst they had planned the route meticulously and knew the mileage they had walked, the trackers had been unable to deal with the altered last loop and had not recorded the actual distance. It also transpires that because a tracker only sends a signal every two minutes, it takes a straight line between each of these points, and because this route involved lots of twists and turns, the route recorded by the tracker missed sections actually walked. Each team member also used a Garmin watch, and they had a separate GPS device. As anyone who has used them will know, keeping these gadgets going over a long period takes some doing, as the battery does not support recording for 48 hours without needing to be recharged several times. Fortunately, Dawn was meticulous with her battery management, setting alarms to remind her when to recharge, and her Garmin watch kept running for the entire event and at the end recorded 103.17 miles.

The Team reached its destination to find John had turned out at about 4:30 am to greet them. As soon as they stopped walking Barbara and Andy's body temperature plummeted and they demanded to sit in John's van with the heater full on. Soon the Team were whisked off to get a shower and some sleep, before reconvening for a celebratory Champagne brunch later in the day.

As this account is being written, Team Barandaw have had their evidence validated and are in the planning stages for their next adventure. Bring it on!

Stampeding cattle on the Canterbury Outer Ring!

Imagine the scene, it's dark, the three of us (Barbara, Andy and Dawn) are pretty tired at about the 90-mile mark on the final of four loops of the Canterbury Outer Ring on our 100 mile epic walk. We are hoping to meet family (including grandchildren) for a

motivational boost at St Cosmus & St Damian Church on the Crab and Winkle Way. Just three small fields to cross on a public footpath to get to the church, the first with cattle in it. We'd been through there three times already with absolutely no problems...

Our support party had decided to walk towards us and had in fact entered the field with the cattle in it before us. We could see their head torches in the distance as we entered the field. Suddenly there was commotion as a 30-40 strong herd of calves, cows and two bulls started stampeding at great speed up and down the field at 90 degrees to our path across it! Our head torches caught the bright eyes, flaring noses, and flicking tails in all their terrifying glory. If you've seen the stampede scene in Jurassic Park, you'll be on the same page as us with what was happening. Our loved ones, thankfully, had the common sense to retreat to safety.



Bravely, Andy refused to give in and continued forward in the hope of a parting of the waves, so to speak. However, the herd had a different idea and continued to stampede up and down. At the point they looked like turning and running at us, Barbara and Dawn did a complete U turn and started running back to the safety of the fence line (hearing Andy's voice fading in the background saying '*it's not a good idea to run*'). Andy retreated with more dignity than the girls, that's for sure. We don't know what had caused the cattle's distress; maybe it was our head torches or perhaps we looked and smelt like cattle rustlers!

Much studying of OS Maps on a phone, and we found a work around via a permissive way and footpath back onto the Crab and Winkle Way, eventually to meet up with our relieved supporters.

It was very scary at the time and, whilst none of us would describe it as a highlight, it will be a lasting memory for all of us. Perhaps our risk assessment skills need a bit of brushing up?

Barbara, Andy, Dawn

JILL GREEN (AND JIM CATCHPOLE) – 100+ MILES

It's now August we look back on 2021 so far with mixed feelings. Today, August 2nd, we had a month's worth of rain in two hours, on several other days it rained all day long. I am so glad to report that for the two big walks we have undertaken the weather has been kind to us. Some of you will remember the Kent (Millennium) 100 in 2000 was very wet. The Cinque Ports in 2018 was so very hot, then we had those storms with quite amazing lightnings, followed by the FROGS.

This year our 100 was like no other, because it was all ours, here on the Isle of Wight. It took ages planning, getting the correct distance. We set off at 00.05 on Saturday May 29th. There was a huge red moon, I've never seen anything like it. On that first night, we were over dressed, the second night we were so cold, the long grass and vegetation soaked us, we could wring our socks out, and were really glad we had warm hats and gloves. I am proud to say that if anyone had done a surprise kit check, we had everything. It was so good to have Debbie Green (*no relation*) with us for her first 100, and Jim was delighted to finish his 10th. He has received a very nice hand written letter of congratulations from Julie Cribb, Chair of the LDWA. (*Having recently spoken to her, Jill is, modestly, absolutely chuffed at becoming the oldest female finisher of any 100 (as confirmed by the 100s Recorder) – Ed.*)

By the time you read this it will seem like a distant dream for the three of us – it's a happy dream, I can say we really did enjoy it. I'm not going to describe it in great details. The route remains in my waterproof map in biro pen, so it will never rub off.

Bonus Walk Report – Jill's 80th Birthday celebration

Long before we knew there was going to be this wonderful opportunity to do our own hundred miles, I had decided to kind of replicate what we had done 20 years ago, by walking 80 km for my 80th year, asking like-minded people to join. I selected July 10th and sent invitations on my Christmas card. To my amazement, nearly all the people that I had asked said they would come – and so it was that 22 people started at 7.30am in the rain; when the rain stopped, I was absolutely thrilled to see they were mostly wearing the same tee-shirts that Jim and I had been given as a gift, with '*Jill 80 for 80*' on them. We had choc ices at Godshell, strawberries and cream at Blackgang viewpoint, plus a wonderful cake at our meal stop. It would have been amazing if all 22 had finished the 50 miles, some knew they would just walk in daylight due to problems, and it was great that 16 of us finished together on Sunday morning, some 22 hours later. I feel so lucky to have such wonderful friends. Yes, this route is all marked in red, albeit on a different map!

JUDY RICKWOOD – 100+ MILES

I entered this as soon as I heard it was taking place, it would be my 13th hundred so I was keen to do this to get a bit nearer to my goal of 20. It just so happened that my entry number was also 13, so that was a bit ominous! I spent ages faffing about which route to do – they all were appealing but it always came back to the fact that I didn't want to be doing the night bit on my own, it's strange how, on a 'normal' 100 event, I often do the night sections on my own without any worry – because I suppose I know that somewhere out there are 500 other people. I eventually decided on Loops from home, and that way I could possibly talk Andy (my other half) into doing the night section with me; he is OK with distances up to about 15 miles, so I thought that could string out the hours of darkness. Anyway, with almost no planning and very little idea, here's how it went

Loop 1

Left home in Great Comp, Platt at 5am, to get in as many miles as I could in daylight; the route took me via Crouch, Basted, Claygate Cross, Plaxtol, past Old Soar Manor into Dunks Green, then went through the beautiful Fairlawne estate to Shipbourne & followed the Greensand Way for a while through Ightham Mote and down into Underriver. Made my way up out of Underriver on a very unpleasant steep & muddy track into Knole Park where I stopped at 9:00am & had a slice of toast and a Twix (not my normal choice of breakfast). The weather was already getting pretty warm by this point.

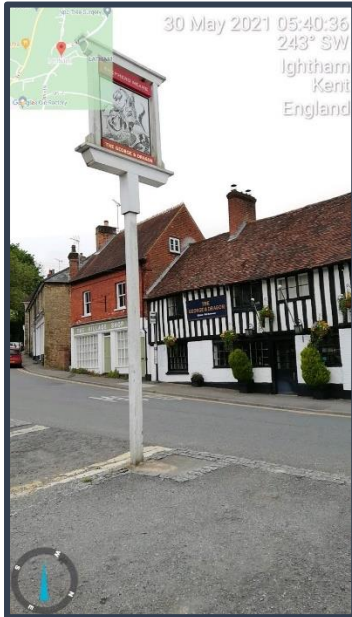
After a pleasant little stop in Knole, I headed across Sevenoaks Common & down into Weald Village then out to Bayleys Hill and Winkhurst Green to arrive at Bough Beech Reservoir, which looked lovely in the sunshine. I took a little detour here, so that I could explore Bore Place and then followed various tracks to reach Chiddingstone Village where I met Andy at the Castle Pub at

1pm. The heat was getting to me by then, and a pint of the local Larkins ale was just the job. (Had a few cattle incidents between Weald and Winkhurst Green, one resulting in a pretty nifty escape into somebody's garden!)

Left Chiddingstone and went via Chiddingstone Causeway, Charcott & Leigh to follow the Eden Valley walk to Tonbridge Castle, I sat in Tonbridge Park for a while, contemplating whether I was mad or not – I was far too hot, my bag was too heavy and I was totally fed up with my own company. I gave myself a half-hearted talking to and set off again. This was now on my return towards home from my first loop, went back through Hildenborough, Fairlawne (again, but a different part), Yopps Green & Basted to reach Great Comp at 8:30pm with 43 miles completed.

Once indoors I had a real battle with myself as to whether I wanted to carry on, the pull of the sofa was (almost) overwhelming – but after a cup of tea and a cake, a change of socks and some foot tending, I was ready for heading out again. Andy had an idea that it was going to cool off considerably at night and so in his rucksack he packed a very small bottle of rum, so that we could fend off the cold and liven our spirits in the small hours!

Loop 2 (with Andy) Left Great Comp 9.10pm, we went through Mereworth Woods to Swanton Lane and then carried on through the woods to Gover Hill. From here, we followed the Wealdway for a time, and, as we went through the metal kissing



gate to the village green at West Peckham, Andy turned round and his rucksack swung against the metal, smashing the bottle of rum to pieces which then trickled all the way down the back of his trousers. This put a bit of a dampener on things and smelt awful! We carried on our way (no use crying over spilt rum!) into Hadlow and followed footpaths around some enormous fields which seemed to go on forever, and eventually made our way back through Oxen Hoath to Gover Hill, and then a different route through Mereworth Woods back to Great Comp at 2:30am Sunday, with 56 miles done. Andy went straight to bed and I sat on the sofa dazed & confused! Knowing I couldn't stop for more than 2 hours, I thought I might benefit from an hour's sleep so I set the alarm & rested for a while which turned out to be a good idea.

Loop 3 Left home 4.20am and just walked around Comp, Borough Green, Ightham, Basted and Mereworth Woods for 4½ hours, until I had completed another 15 miles, then I returned to Great Comp 8:50am Sunday. 71 miles done, and I was feeling much better, so I quickly showered & changed, and had some boiled eggs & toast for breakfast, as I realized I had not really eaten anything since Knole Park 24 hours earlier!

Loop 4 Left Great Comp 10.15am feeling like a new person, but still with not much of a route plan in my head. I headed off across Wrotham Golf Course and into Offham village, then followed various lanes & paths to the town of West Malling, where I met Andy again for a coffee. We met up again at the Moody Mare pub on Seven Mile Lane and then he also did the last 7 miles with me.

05:40 – empty roads; who knew?

We arrived back home to Great Comp at 9.10pm Sunday with me having clocked up 102 miles in 40 hours 10 minutes.

Looking back, I found this so much harder than any of the actual 100 events I've done – probably my fault for lack of planning, but primarily the thing that made it the hardest was not having a cheery checkpoint to aim for every 7 or 8 miles! Roll on 2022.



A little relaxation, Saturday night



Sunday lunchtime, Offham



Great Comp, just finished – and looking good

TONY BARTER (AND FRIENDS) – 100+ MILES

The day after the Virtual 100, I can confess to having a very pleasant 40 odd hours walking around Ashford, the 5 planned Loops worked well. Fortunately, there were no pathing problems since the Loops were reconnoitred earlier this year. It was very impressive to see how the flora changes so quickly! Thanks were offered at all the open local hostleries that were passed, for the lifting of some of the Covid restrictions – it only meant 5 pubs, but at least they provided sustenance. What with all the to-ing and fro-ing from home, the total distance was over 102 miles, but given the superb weather I have no reason to complain. The evidence has been submitted and I now await the verdict of the validation team – hopefully, I managed to follow all the instructions!



We, a trio of myself, Barry Coles & John Allen, set off from South Ashford at 06:32 on a lovely Saturday morning for the first of several gentle strolls.

The 1st Loop was out via Hamstreet, Snargate to Appledore and then back via Kenardington and Shadoxhurst. Lunch was taken at The Black Lion in Appledore, with a refreshment break at The Kings Head, Shadoxhurst, 2 pubs, 3 beers & 28.3 miles.

The 2nd Loop was out via Shadoxhurst and Woodchurch to Bethersden returning via Great Chart, a refreshment stop was had at The Bonny Cravat in Woodchurch, 3 pubs, 4 beers & 45 miles.

The 3rd Loop, the night section, was out via Great Chart to Charing then back via Wye and Brook, a pause was taken in a bus shelter in Charing at 02:00 Sunday morning, unfortunately there were no pubs open, so 3 pubs, 4 beers & 68.6 miles.

The 4th Loop was to the east of Ashford, out via Mersham & Smeeth to Brabourne then back via Brook. The Five Bells at Brabourne provided the lunch stop; 4 pubs, 6 beers & 86.2 miles.

The final Loop, Loop 5, was a reverse of the 2nd, so out via Great Chart to Bethersden and then back via Woodchurch and Shadoxhurst, again Woodchurch provided the refreshment stop, this time in The Six Bells.

We finished at 23:23 – 5 pubs, 8 beers & 102.7 miles, in a time of 40 hrs 51 mins.

Notable events were being ambushed by a family of 3 rampaging badgers just along from Hothfield Common, not watching the sunrise as it was overcast at 04:45, and being reminded that no matter how warm it is during the day it is always cold in the early hours! I can now relax into anticipation for next year's Trans Pennine 100.



JOHN COOK – 100+ MILES

What I Did On That Weekend

For my virtual 100, I decided not to walk anywhere near home after having to stick to walking around the local area for so long, so I decided to go to Yorkshire. I knew I wanted to do the route of the 'A Foot in 2 Dales', and then found another 50 mile route going in the opposite direction, but in the same general area as the 2 Dales, The Herriot Way. I based myself in the YHA hostel in Hawes, as both routes go close by, so I was able to replenish supplies at the half way stage as I was going to do the walk unaided.

I set off at 04:57, as the sun was turning the hills above Hawes a beautiful shade of gold. The 2019 AFI2D route doesn't go through Hawes (the new one will), so I had to walk roughly 1½ miles to reach the route. It would normally start in Harmby and then into Swaledale first, before going over Great Shunner Fell on the Pennine Way, and on into Wensleydale.

This is one of my favourite 50s, but as I had only seen Wensleydale in darkness it was lovely to be able to see it in daylight. I managed to get lost on the section on the moors after Dents Houses as I didn't realise that I had to turn off the track at a certain point, and then couldn't find the path that I needed to go over a stream by some falls – and ended up walking about 6 extra miles and lost 2 hours in this section. I arrived back at the hostel around 01:30 and had a lovely cold shower, before re-stocking my rucksack.

I had bought a book with a route description of The Herriot Way, as it's not waymarked or shown on the map. I quickly realised the author had a unique way of finding the Pennine Way and back over Great Shunner, so I decided to go a longer way round as there was less chance of me getting lost. This set the tone for the rest of the walk. Every time I decided to trust the book, I ended up confused and lost. I had to use the map to work out where each section was going to and what route the author might have meant. I know I ended up walking further than was intended, but it was worth it not to get lost.

I met a fellow 100 miler in Hawes around 03:00; who else would be sitting on a bench changing his socks at that time of night? He was doing 'The Lady Anne's Way'.

I had been saying to myself that I would complete the 100 miles in 38-40 hours, but towards the end I lost all sense and ran the last 1½ miles to the hostel, to make sure I finished in no more than 40 hours. I finished at 20:57hrs, exactly 40 hours after I had set off. Officially I claimed 104 miles, but I probably did 110 in reality.

Highlights for me were:

- The kindness of the two ladies who refilled my water bottles on the Saturday.
- Getting bitten on the back of my leg by a lamb as I stood in its shady spot to look at my map (cute!).
- Hallucinating and seeing some Goblins from the Noddy books.
- Having my own clean shower to use half way round (No queue, no grass) and at the end.
- Still feeling fit at the end of it.
- Finding out the hostel sold bottles of beer when I'd finished.
- Choosing my start time, so that I only had to walk through one night.

The low point was:

- Being chased by nearly every cow I passed by, even some in a field when I was walking on a road!

I thoroughly enjoyed the whole weekend and am really grateful to everyone who gave up their time to verify everyone's efforts, so that we could at least do a 100 during these times.

KEITH WARMAN – 100+ Miles

(his 30th successful 100 completion)

For my virtual 100, I decided on a series of 8 Loops, varying from 3 to 20 miles, from home. I visited Hucking, Egerton, Yalding, Loose, Kingswood and Langley and took photos at the extremity of each Loop as verification evidence. I also submitted three witness statements.



Seeking inspiration from the Hucking Estate shepherd?



Fairbourne Heath, just off the Greensand Way, Kingswood 10 Loop



Hard at work after a strenuous Loop



Jim and Keith, about to commence the Yalding Loop

Luckily, the days were warm and dry with cooler nights. I managed two short naps, of 30 and 10 minutes, and felt much revived.

I walked 40 miles alone and then was delighted to be joined by Jim Briggs on Saturday night for my 20 miles Yalding Loop. I then walked another Loop, before being joined by my partner, Shirlie Gill, for the last four Loops. We had a wonderful surprise when Neil Higham turned up and walked the final two Loops with us. His banter certainly helped focus attention away from my weariness. Mind you, I did have a few vivid hallucinations – about 10:15pm, Sunday night, I was met with puzzled blank faces when I asked Neil and Shirlie if they knew the man I had just seen them talking to

My sincere thanks go to Jim, Neil and Shirlie for their cheerful company on some of my Loops. Extra thanks to Shirlie for her unstinting support and encouragement in route-planning, recceing, checkpointing and time-keeping. It was a memorable Hundred! (*Jim and Neil, using separate 'apps', both believe that Keith actually completed well over 105 miles*)

DON NEWMAN – 80+ MILES

My Weald Hundred (Support from London Group + Worthing A&E)

Parts of my 100 route were going to be boring, so I asked five London Group members, and two other friends, if they would walk some miles with me, and keep me sane. They all responded to the call. Thank you so much!



As I struggle with hills these days, I designed a flat route, with only about 4,000 ft of climbing. From Worthing, along the coast to Shoreham, up the River Adur to Steyning, west through Washington & Storrington to Amberley. North from there to Pulborough, and on up the Wey South Path (old canal towpath) to Shalford, then on the Founders Challenge route to Blackheath and on to our home in Peaslake. From Peaslake, south up to Pitch Hill, down to Cranleigh, and then flat along the Downs Link (dismantled railway line), all the way (some 27 miles) to Shoreham, then 5 coastal miles back to Worthing. I had just 3 fixed checkpoints, our home and 2 pubs (1 before each night section). I'd also noted numerous cafes & shops which I could use if necessary.

My first supporter was Dave Williams. He is unable to walk far at the moment, but travelled to Worthing on Friday evening to ensure that I had a healthy Wetherspoons meal before my walk. He was also on hand at 8am on Saturday morning, to take my photo and wish me luck, thus delaying his Wetherspoons breakfast. Well beyond the call of duty!

I walked the first 32 pleasant, sunny miles, by myself. At Steyning I bought cake and a chocolate milk shake. Unfortunately, I spilled half of the latter on my trousers, which made me look like I needed a nappy change.

Before dark, Paul Lawrence met me at The Limeburners pub. He had been stranded on a train, and then chased across a field by aggressive cows on the way to the pub, but he persisted, and arrived in good time. He walked through the night along the towpath with me, and other friends took over at daylight. At home, I enjoyed 2 hours of porridge and pampering from Jane. Surprisingly, I wasn't at all tired.



At Cranleigh, I was met by Steve Garnsey and his lovely family, Landy with little Ricky and Becky, and by Carol Buss. We all walked together for a short distance, Steve walked a bit further, and Carol walked 8 miles, all the way to Slinfold and beyond. Carol had found a farm café terrace where we stopped for tea and toilets; blissful. Paul Lawrence rejoined me at the Bax Castle pub, where we enjoyed pizza and shandy. Then we strode on through Southwater, and into our second night section. We nearly reached Partridge Green, with just 14 flat miles to go. We were cruising towards an easy, early finish and my 34th annual 100 completion. What could possibly go wrong?

Disaster arrived out of the dark, in the shape of a hurtling cyclist, who crashed into me from behind. The impact knocked me down, and my head hit the hard surface. I stood up straight away, and felt my forehead, where there was a lot of blood. The cyclist meanwhile, was on the ground, with his bike on top of him. Paul asked if he was OK, but he just mumbled incoherently. He was not wearing a helmet. The cyclist soon recovered enough to stand up. We had a short exchange of views. He asked what we were doing, and why we didn't wear red rear lights at night. We said that we had bright torches and ample reflectors on our rucksacks, and that if he hadn't been pedaling so fast he would have been able to avoid us. On further analysis next day, when we went back to look for my lost hearing aid (we didn't find it) we think that his view ahead was probably obscured by a rise and bridge which we had just crossed – but his excessive speed was still a big factor.

The cyclist departed. I was surprisingly unhurt, and my first thought was to just wash the blood away and carry on walking. Paul took a photo of my forehead, and showed me the mass of congealed blood. Suddenly A&E seemed like a better idea, to get me checked for concussion, and to have the wound cleaned professionally. We walked on into Partridge Green (86 miles) from where a taxi eventually took us to Worthing. After prompt triage, I waited over 3 hours in A&E but, when the doctor and nurses did attend to me, they were wonderful. A scan confirmed that my head was still attached, the wound was cleaned and dressed by a couple of jovial nursing comedians from the Philippines, and I emerged into the daylight looking like the proverbial Egyptian mummy.

It was a huge disappointment, not being able to finish the event, but I really had no choice following the accident. I had 3 weeks of painful knees, but am fully recovered now. Recently, I returned to the scene of the crime, with Tara Williams. We completed the

last miles, with Tara watching my back for manic cyclists. As the accident was not my fault, I will be asking the 100 organisers to count this as my 34th 100 completion, and I'm hoping for an understanding outcome.

Postscript – sad to say, but Don's request – along with, apparently, a number of others – was rejected.



PAUL MCAULIFFE AND STEVE RUSSELL – 70+ Miles

A Salutory Experience

Steve told Ann there was to be no South Wales 100 this year, but that a Virtual 100 was being set up. **‘You’re not doing that by yourself.’** ‘I’ll ask Paul.’ *‘I’m up for it providing that it is a proper Challenge 100 route with RDs.’* I was thinking of the Cinque Ports 100 – there are plenty of towns & villages en route for supplies.’ *‘Agreed.’*

Subsequently, training walks commenced, leading to the realisation that new shoes were required; David Thornton offered to provide us with a breakfast stop at Hythe, and Rex offered to help us from Sandwich. We had an anticipated CP arrival schedule based on Steve's 2018 Cinque Ports progress (Marshals Walk) and so would let them know how we were going against that.

Paul enlisted the help of a mutual friend to drive us to the start at Hastings. As we aimed to finish at Dover Priory Station, we amended the start to Rock-a-Nore, by the Fishing Huts. Paul said Fred would get us there in plenty of time for our 9am start on Saturday. He wasn't joking. An adrenaline rush set us up, although Paul's feet were subject to a lot of imaginary pedal pushing. A leisurely cup of coffee at the fisherman's café calmed us down before the off.



Paul (left) and Steve looking happy and relatively relaxed at their start

We agreed that we were going to set a leisurely pace, and so would probably fall a bit behind the schedule.

And leisurely it was. We were 30 minutes behind at Rye, which already was busy with tourists. Somehow we lost a further 30 minutes in the next 7 miles to Wittersham. It was, however, a good day for walking, and so we were quite relaxed about this. We didn't lose any further time getting to Tenterden. Here, to our surprise, we encountered a lady sitting in the sun on a bench outside the church, who asked if we were doing the Virtual Cinque Ports. She had a Herts & Essex LDWA badge, and it transpired that she was awaiting the arrival of Alan Stewart as she was going to accompany him on the night section – and then go ahead to do the same for the next night. We forgot to ask her name (*it was, of course, Elaine – see Alan's Report*). We then went into Waitrose to stock up on supplies for the night. This set us a further 30 minutes behind schedule. Oh, how we missed the ease of CPs!

At Appledore we sat by the Church to prepare ourselves for the night section ahead, ignoring the adjacent pub. It started fine, and the frogs greeted our arrival onto the marshes. Here, however, it all started to unravel. The air was damp and the first rape-seed field encountered ominously changed our mood. Waterproof jackets went on, then more rape-seed fields were traversed, with the path through not always being apparent, with one field requiring the GPS to find our way around it. That 10 miles set us back a further 45 minutes.



We sat on a bench on the Green by the Lydd CP at 2am to recover, and noticed a car slowly circling around the green towards us. 'It's a police car and it'll spot our head torches & come to check us out.' Sure enough, after a while, a young policeman appeared in front of us. A pleasant exchange followed and we advised him he might find others such as us later on.

Gloves on and onto New Romney & Dymchurch – now 2½ hours behind schedule. We phoned David to advise our Hythe ETA.

The prospect of seeing David for a chat and change of clothes etc. spurred us on. The climb up by Port Lympne was easier than anticipated, and we gradually shed layers and our spirits lifted as we approached Hythe. What a

surprise we encountered at the Sports Pavilion after 58 miles! David had easy chairs set up, with hot food and tea to cheer us up. Here we changed our socks etc and prepared for the next stage.



Breakfast at Hythe

We set off, rejuvenated, towards Folkestone. At Sandgate the day trippers were gathering, and we looked rather incongruous as we negotiated them to find the steps up to The Leas. Inexplicably, we lost a further 20 minutes on that 6 mile section.

Opposite the Folkestone CP was the British Lion pub with an inviting 2 seats outside. Suitably refreshed we set off on the 9 miles to Dover. And then it all unravelled

The detour advised by Don took us up to the NDW west of the Warren. Paul went up the many steps encountered in his normal easy manner, to disappear from view whilst Steve (being a few years older) found them even more difficult than before. Near the top a family walking down offered the (usual) cheery encouragement of 'not far to go now' and a rather tetchy Steve replied 'I've still got another 35 miles!' Not a good sign.

That 9 miles seemed interminable. Steve, now wearing his light shoes, seemed to catch every tree root, and Paul found the flat and downhill sections were causing painful toes on both feet. As Steve sat on an Armco barrier on the bridge over the A20, waiting for Paul, he came to the conclusion that they were now slowing further and might have to call it a day before the finish (without any way of getting back home until morning), whilst at Dover there would be a train back to Maidstone that evening. As Paul approached, he voiced the same thought. Thus, independently, we had arrived at the same conclusion.

Dover Town Hall was reached, and steps retraced to Dover Priory. Having just missed a train it was an hour to the next one. Rex was telephoned to tell him that after 72 miles we were calling it a day. He gently admonished us. The Priory Hotel beckoned. Sitting in the sun, with suitable refreshment, we reflected on the experience. We were cheered up by the occupants of the next table lauding our achievement, despite us not seeing it through.

Paul and Steve decided there and then, that that was the last of their long challenges So, a week later, Paul entered a 100k running race on the South Downs, and Steve reserved a hotel room in Barnsley for 2022.

PETER JULL – 80+ MILES

The Cinque Ports 100 route (*Note – this was to be walked in **REVERSE***) was chosen because it offered more opportunities for refreshments and toilets than others. A self-supported walk was envisioned going from Spar to chip shop to Chinese takeaway. In the end Nicola Foad, Jim Briggs, Clare Evans, Cathy Waters and Ros Humphries insisted on being mobile checkpoints to maximise my chances of finishing and did a grand job of it, for which deep gratitude is due. Wanting a qualifier for the 2022 100, Penny Southern was persuaded that trudging up and down the Royal Military Canal Path from dawn 'til dusk, whilst meeting the 50 mile criterion, didn't really test the navigation and walking in the dark abilities that a qualifier is intended to do, and joined me. Navigation test – didn't happen (she followed someone who knew the way!), walking in the dark – definitely happened.



Starting from Dover Priory, for train and bus return journey options, added distance to be taken off elsewhere, as did a detour round the 'closed for The Open' Royal St. George's golf course. Jim set us off with his satellite tracker at 8am and provided tea and Gatorade at Maydensole & Northbourne. Clare had sandwiches for us in Sandwich and ice cream in Walmer. Making better time than predicted, we were in St. Margaret's a minute before she arrived to serve hot pasta on a picnic table with table cloth – but in the car park. That luxury was repeated at Dover's Western Heights, looking down on where we'd started some 10 hours earlier. Still whizzing along, the rendezvous at Capel was passed too soon and we pressed on through The Warren and past sounds of Euro 2020 at Folkestone's Harbour Arm to reach Penny's house, which is right on route in Sandgate, as darkness & drooping eyelids arrived.

Mr Penny – aka Russell – had a welcome stew ready and a comfortable armchair for an initial snooze. Waved off to spend the night with his wife, it was out into the dark and woods. The weather forecast for a dry weekend proved true but the night was cold and a heavy dew wetted long grass, which defeated my shoes. Penny was already moving quicker and then wet socks = soft skin = sore feet. Down the squelchy path beside Port Lympne Zoo, and onto Romney Marsh an awakened Russell met us, as a grey dawn crept in, with extra rations; those crazy frogs

were subdued compared to 2018. Shortly afterwards we passed Don Arthurs doing the route west to east, where we were over half way, even though he'd started an hour earlier.

Eyes wanted to close again, and a wooden footbridge was the only dew free place to lie, so Penny shivered while I snored. Getting behind schedule now, Jim arrived with a McDonald's breakfast near St Mary in the Marsh rather than New Romney; we were avoiding the boring Dymchurch sea wall. At New Romney, the public conveniences were not yet open, which was rather

inconvenient. Jim provided more rations and Penny decided she was not enamoured by thoughts of a second night (was it the snoring?) and left me, but did a further 2 miles towards a rendezvous with Russell, to make her record 60.



In Lydd the toilets were out of order, which was now seriously inconvenient, and only to be resolved *al fresco* later. But the tracker overcame a miscommunication and Clare and Ros at Hardy Hall found me in the square. Clare walked on with me but it seemed every field was entangling rape or newly furrowed potatoes awkwardly spaced for suffering feet. Another 40 winks was needed in some shade, but when we got to Fairfield church where Ros and dog and picnic awaited, we were still regaining on the schedule. Wrenching ourselves away from a beautiful sunny spot, the route dodged Appledore to short cut the earlier additional distance through Stone in Oxney instead, without meeting my favourite friendly alpacas in their usual field there.

In Tenterden, Nicola and Cathy were on duty having hurried there, the tracker reporting us further ahead of expectations. Well fed, the route out of Tenterden is changed in appearance since 2018 by building work. Back on the Isle of Oxney, at Wittersham, Nicola and Cathy were ready again as the church clock said nearly 9pm. On a whim, thinking they'd be hanging around in Rye for a long time 'til we got there, it was suggested they go to Peasmarsh, half way. The judicious ingestion of dioralyte, on Clare's medical advice, had warded off 'The Lean' which had finished my last three 100s, and on tarmac speed ahead was acceptable, but trepidacious stepping across rough ground, anticipating an unknown degree of pain with each footfall, was much slower. And then night fell and progress got slower still, and eyes demanded to be shut again for many minutes more. Hobbling on, the calculations of distance left versus time remaining didn't look too bad – until you factored in speed actually being achieved. By Peasmarsh, with 4 hours 'til daylight returned, that calculation no longer showed a potential 'in time' finish and the motivation to endure more had evaporated. So Jempson's supermarket car park was as far as I got, with retirement there now too easy. 15½ miles in 7½ hours is normally a doddle, but is not a hobble.

PENNY SOUTHERN – 60+ MILES

My 100, started out as and I quote: ‘Peter, how can I support you during your Virtual 100?’ My application went in the next day and the rest, as they say,.... is history



I’ve always been a keen walker and spent many a holiday walking hundreds of miles but mainly in the day time and with a very comfortable B&B at the end of each day. I’ve been tempted by the 100 event, but certainly didn’t feel ready for this one, but I’d convinced myself that getting to 50 miles would enable me to sign up for the Trans-Pennine 100 next year. I’d grown up in Derbyshire, so any excuse to get back into the Peak District started to sound attractive, especially an event that was happening in the LDWA 50th anniversary and it coincided with my 60th, then why wouldn’t I?

Anyway, back to the ‘helping Peter’ conversation, he’d managed to convince me that I’d be fine and I’d have no trouble getting this one completed. At 8am Saturday 29th of May, I pitched up at Dover Priory Station with route directions, rucksack and bags of trepidation to meet my navigation and walking hero Mr P Jull.

Jim Briggs (after attaching a tracker to us!) and Russell (my husband) waved us off and there you have it, the start of my first 100.

I can’t even begin to share with you my highlights, there were so many. The first, just walking with Peter and all that I learnt from his incredible experience, to the amazing people that supported us on the way.

Jim at the start and at numerous check points along the way, what a great guy, I didn’t quite understand the need for his chairs at the first one, but I soon learnt the importance of sitting on them later into the challenge. To Clare and her daughter at Sandwich and Deal, where I was treated to a take

away coffee and cookie and to fabulous hot pasta, served on a table complete with tablecloth at St Margaret’s Bay car park.

To Russell who had made beef casserole and got out of bed at 3:30am to meet us at Aldergate bridge with hot drinks – and again to Jim who took my order for a McDonalds breakfast and delivered it on The Marsh at St Mary Church – amazing...



It’s odd reflecting now on the actual walk, it was a beautiful but a challenging route through Kent countryside but I loved every minute of it, the pace was steady, the scenery beautiful, a few footpaths tricky but I felt great and, the more the miles dropped off, the stronger I became.

When we hit the seafront at Folkestone and it started to get dark I was amazed I’d walked so far without a niggle, apart from losing several games of word association to my walking legend!

Lyddite!!!! Who the heck had heard of that? I just thought he was being rude about Lydd, Anyway it’s safe to say I’d got hammered, not sure why I kept suggesting we’d keep playing it, especially through the night when my brain started to fade. It had to be my competitive spirit that convinced me I would win, silly me for even thinking it!

In the early hours of Sunday 30th, I’d reached my 50 and celebrated with a little dance, much to the amusement of the Marsh laughing frogs.....

At 58 miles I decided to head home and said my reluctant goodbyes to Peter at New Romney, his ears certainly needed a rest and I wanted to just cover a couple more miles before I called it a day....

What an experience, I wouldn’t have got anywhere close without the fantastic support so a huge thank you to Russell, Jim and Clare and a massive virtual hug to Peter.... What a star!

The finish....60 blinking miles.....yippee.

ANDREW BOULDEN (AND FRIENDS) – 80+ MILES

Initially I was not overly attracted to consider walking 100 miles especially on an unsupported basis. However, I allowed myself not only to be convinced to give it a go, but also work out a suitable route after 3 other LDWA friends (Marta Kunika, Chris Blackwell and Andrew Moore) also threw their hats into the ring. My sister and fellow Kent member Deborah Jarrett volunteered to provide support, so the process started.

Regular visits to Kent to visit family during the early part of 2021 provided recce opportunities, and soon the route was established. A 40 mile linear from Deal Pier to Stowting, primarily based on Kent’s own White Cliffs 50 mile challenge, kicked things off with interim Checkpoints at Capel Le Ferne, 16 miles, and Farthing Common, 25 miles, before a hot meal at Stowting. Chris and I started at 6am, with Marta and Andrew at 7:45am.

Refuelled, we set off on a 35 mile Loop via the North Downs Way and the Stour Valley Walk via Wye, Chilham, Canterbury, Chartham and Crundale Church, to arrive back at Stowting for a cooked breakfast. Interim Checkpoint at Old Wives Lees which was around mid-way on the Loop.

With 75 miles completed, the last Loop was 25 miles to Hamstreet, via Lympe Castle and the Royal Military Canal (RMC), and then back following the Saxon Shore Way in part.

Congratulations to my fellow walkers Marta, Chris and Andrew who all successfully completed the full route. However, I got the dreaded LEANS after 60 miles, which gradually got worse, albeit manageable until the steep descent onto the RMC after 83 miles (meeting Alan Stewart hereabouts). Pain increased, together with the occasional loss of balance, where I became closely acquainted with brambles and stinging nettles on a particularly narrow and rutted section. Walking into Hamstreet, I had 2 options of resting a bit, as still only late Sunday morning, and continue to see what level of pain I could endure – or get a lift back with Deborah and break into the beers I had cooling in the fridge.

Whilst I admire those who push on through the pain barrier, I am not one of those, so I was on my first beer within the hour. Thankfully I was pretty much back to normal in 48 hours, and out doing a 28 miler after 3 days.

Finally a massive thank you to my sister Deborah and her partner Mike, who provided excellent support and food throughout the weekend

MARSHALL ELLIOTT – 50+ MILES

I hadn't expected to do another 100 following the Hadrian Hundred in 2019. Doing a 100 requires a lot of time and commitment, and my wife got me to agree that one was enough. Because of the special conditions surrounding the 100 this year, I thought I could do it with minimal impact on my wife and other things in our life. So I entered without telling her or anyone else in the family, and set about planning and preparation based on a series of Loops from our home at Sandwich. I downloaded several gps apps on my phone and experimented plotting and measuring routes.



Marshall in Ash

All was going well – until two weeks ahead of the event, my wife informed me that two of our offspring were coming with their partners to stay with us the very same weekend of the 100 and that she had planned a special family event for the 6 of us on the Sunday. I had assumed, wrongly as it turned out, that because of Covid, we wouldn't have visitors for several more months. I will spare you all the details of the argument that ensued when I broke the news that I was planning to walk a hundred miles that same weekend. When the air finally cooled, several hours later, it was agreed I could walk as far as I wanted on Saturday but had to be ready for family action on Sunday.

So I was up and ready to start by 05:30 on Saturday. My first Loop of 11 miles followed the English Coastal Path for 6 miles to the upper path across Royal St George's golf club, over the railway to Worth and back to Sandwich. I took Meg (my border collie) with me. When I got home, my eldest son was out of bed and decided to join me on my second Loop, of 10 miles. This time we walked along the Stour Valley Way for a few miles before heading to Ash and then Marshborough and back to Sandwich. I completed two more of the coastal Loops, and one more inland Loop, making a total of 53 miles, stopping just after 9pm on Saturday.

I was disappointed in not being able to do the full hundred. I was feeling good after completing 53 miles and obviously had plenty of time in hand, even though I had not been pushing myself hard. I was pleased to have had the chance for one long walk after more than a year of almost complete isolation, and to have had my son with me for a part of it. I will not be entering any further hundred events. I have agreed to limit myself to walks and events that can be done in part of a day, and where I can take my dog.

Many congratulations to all those who also took part in the 2021 100. Hope to see you at a Kent LDWA social walk soon

NEIL HIGHAM – 50+ MILES

- Entered event with a few hours to spare. Planned 7 loops from home (Oxted), 2 longest first, shortest over Saturday night, ‘splash & dash’ to finish. Mainly on Greensand Way (GSW), Bletchingley at western end, Oxted in middle, Sevenoaks at eastern end, plus ‘straying’ onto the North Downs Way (NDW) thrice. Hills included to alleviate any boredom. Physical preparation – minimal, just over 120 miles walked so far in 2021. Route description – not needed (didn’t have one anyway). Maps – not required (one taken, albeit unused). Stiles – fewer the better. Best bet was for me to walk mostly unaccompanied.
- Met with my neighbour, Tim Bedwell (Surrey Group Chair), for a coffee on the Wednesday beforehand – Tim provided some very useful and timely technical assistance with apps (Sports Tracker and Timestamp Camera) and volunteered to ‘checkpoint’ for, and/or perhaps walk with, me on Sunday / Sunday night (Tim had also entered, but planned to walk only on the Saturday, finishing in the evening at the latest). I think, though, that Tim recognised that he was on fairly safe grounds with this offer ...
- Started 02:45 – first loop of 19.6 miles; GSW to Bletchingley (at 05:01) and back on NDW (all to the not so pleasant tune of the M25), then up to another part of the GSW and home, essentially on schedule, at 09:23 – rewarded with 2 lovely cups of tea whilst sat (with padded cushion) on bench outside back door, but didn’t feel like refuelling.
- Set off again 10:23; how did I ‘lose’ a full hour effectively doing nothing? Hotter now and a few steep hills (Toy’s and Ide). Unexpectedly met Surrey/Kent Group/Social Walk at Ide Hill (26 miles overall for me) – good for verification (see photo), but – and all my own fault – I stopped too long for chats. Unable to properly refuel; ‘lost’ perhaps 25 minutes here. Kent Group’s Life President had arrived by car, provided me with an ice-cold water refill (gratefully accepted). Brenda, Brian’s wife, on hearing I was walking to Sevenoaks, innocently asked ‘Would you like a lift, Neil?’ Very tempting, Yes, but let Brian explain.
- ‘Undercarriage’ problem starting to bite (almost literally) – lack of grease, poor undergarment choice or (newish) shorts; or a combination of all three, with heat and sweat thrown in? Jury is still out on this. Unable to progress as well as intended.
- Down to the A25 at Brasted, under M25 and up to NDW, passing thru a field where I saw cattle rampaging just 5 minutes before I got there – I had no chance of out-pacing them, as fp went steeply uphill. Off NDW, onto Tandridge Border Path, called at Clacket Lane Motorway Services for a (planned) welcome cuppa, 39.9 miles overall. Soon back onto the GSW and eventually home at 22:43. 12 hours 20 mins for 27.6 miles this loop – not at all good, and now 3 hours behind schedule, but still the 100 was just about feasible, as – other matters being equal – the remaining miles should be easier
- Feet in surprisingly good shape; morale OK. Inspected damage to said undercarriage – brief explanation to spouse Sunday am as to why hall mirror was laid flat on floor; well, it was either that or a photo, and no way was I going to tempt fate
- Carry on or stop? Carry on or stop? Fully 2 hours of pondering, bathing feet and patching up ‘below’ – eventually decided on shortest loop, to struggle past 50 mile mark in 24 hours, just for pride (no need for a 2022 qualifier – that is not on my agenda). Lovely orange moon, but 4.7 miles took just over 2 hours, an even slower loop (at 2.2 mph). Considered reporting self to Standards Authorities over misuse of term ‘splash & dash’. Back at 02:51, now formally retired (the VY100SF validation team accepted 52.0 miles in 24 hours, 6 minutes (*see earlier graphics*)). Fell asleep on mattress, strategically placed near back door.
- Redeemed myself slightly – in my own eyes, at least – by driving over to Sutton Valence Sunday evening and, now again in darkness, walking some 9 miles, ie the last 2 loops, with Keith Warman (and Shirlie Gill) as he completed his 30th.
- So, pitiable attempt at the 100, Yes, just the 60 miles overall in 48 hours (but did increase my yearly total by 50% over the one weekend), when others managed well over the 100, and on harder routes. Would I attempt similar again? Yes, certainly an intriguing possibility at this time of year, even if not to be under formal LDWA auspices. Just one difficulty to overcome



Editor at Ide Hill (26 miles in)



I took a chance on being an Authorised Vehicle – and got meself a cuppa (and extra H2O)



Kent Group has traditionally had an evening pub meet, a ‘Post 100 Get Together’, with buffet food provided, primarily for the 100 entrants and those marshalling at the Kent Checkpoint, to swap stories – but with the meet actually being open to all. Quite obviously, matters would have to be slightly different this year, as there was no Kent Checkpoint, England was still under Covid restrictions and gatherings could not exceed 30 bodies – but the Committee agreed that the VY100SF should, if possible, be marked ‘somehow’.

Entrants were therefore canvassed and offered a couple of choices; a short Sunday morning walk and then (BYO) lunch was the agreed format, with the invite extended to entrants’ helpers. The chosen venue was Jeskyns Community Woodland, near to Gravesend and the A2. On 18th July, some 20 of us were treated to a very pleasant walk through Shorne Woods Country Park and Cobham Park, led by Jim and Sheila Briggs (who had sussed a really good route – no stiles, as I recall!). It was a stinking hot day – 7 miles (even if often in the shade) was very acceptable, with John Gilbert understandably taking a slightly shorter route.

Whilst not in the original plan, we commandeered a couple of the sturdy outdoor tables near the car park, where we could sit and swap more stories, and relax further. Surprisingly, there were few people about overall, maybe they had all gone to the seaside. Stephanie and Helen met us here. In lieu of the normal buffet food, a celebratory cake had been suggested, which Cathy procured, and which was wolfed down by most attendees, with Keith ‘of the 30 100s’ Warman being given the honour of first cut.

Heartfelt thanks were expressed by all to Cathy, for organising the gathering (and providing the cake), and to Jim and Sheila for leading the walk. No photos in this Newsletter, but quite a number (27 total) are available on the Kent Group website (look under Gallery tab and Kent Social Walks 2021); ‘no comment’ from the Editor regarding the last photo ... *(I did mention that it was hot!)*

Whilst the format for the celebration worked very well this year, no decision has yet been taken on future post 100 meets.

A DIVERSIONARY TALE OF FOOTPATHS

Peter Jull

It seems a long time ago, it was certainly pre-pandemic, that on a group walk near Selling, notices regarding a proposed footpath diversion were spotted at the start and end of a short woodland section of footpath. Perplexed at the underlying reason why this application might have been made, the notices didn’t say (at least without reading glasses), I looked it up back at home. The stated reason was that it was in the interest of the landowner’s security and privacy in his garden that it should be. None of us had even noticed that the garden of the neighbouring property could be seen from the footpath because of the existing trees.

An objection was therefore lodged with the suggestion that if the applicant was feeling sensitive about people using the footpath in the wood seeing into his garden he build a fence as most of us have to do or, rather than diverting the footpath to the other side of the wood as proposed, the entry and exit points remained the same with a minor diversion within the wood. The Kent PRoW officer advised that there was no legal obligation for the applicant to seek alternative solutions to his concerns, such as building a fence, without having a diversion and they could only say yes or no to the application as submitted, not a lesser alternative, although a planning inspector might. There were other objectors that the diversion was unnecessary so the case was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.

An Inquiry hearing was scheduled because another objector had requested one rather than a paper adjudication and then Covid intervened. The Inspector couldn’t travel to a site visit. Selling village hall was booked and then un-booked. A remote meeting was agreed with a practice the week before for those unfamiliar with Zoom or Teams. The objector asking for the hearing decided he was uncomfortable with the technology and when the real date arrived I found it was only me, the applicants, KCC and the Inspector. Disconcerting as an unreasonable objector is vulnerable to a claim for costs from the applicants.

The applicants refused to consider the lesser diversion so the Inspector did likewise. Kent PRoW claimed that the termination point of the footpath where it met the road was not substantially less convenient for users, being 50 yards away, or that the enjoyment of the footpath as a whole was diminished. I challenged whether that phrase referred to enjoyment as a whole or the footpath as a whole and what constituted the whole of a footpath. In this case ZR408 is split into 408/1 where it crosses the parish boundary, 408/2 where it crosses another footpath and 408/3 until the number changes at a footpath junction. Also that moving the termination point out of alignment with the road junction, knowing it to be for weak reasons, would make use of the diversion irksome to the point of spoiling my enjoyment.

The Inspector listened carefully and courteously and coped with the perils of working from home when his cat intervened. The hearing time was less than 2 hours but extended by a long comfort break suspension part way through. In due course a decision notice was received confirming the order and excusing the applicant from cutting down a couple of trees where they encroached within the 2 metre width of the alternative route.

In the meantime other diversion applications had been spotted on the PRoW consultation webpage. One near High Halden cited the same privacy and security grounds because an outbuilding had been broken into. I couldn’t see that the outbuilding was even visible from the footpath and objected but withdrew when PRoW advised that the police had suggested moving the footpath further away. The footpath had already been diverted by a previous occupant. Beale’s Revenge was scheduled as a group walk to take revenge on the applicant by using the footpath before the diversion order was confirmed but Covid intervened and by the time we were allowed out again the diversion had been implemented and the revenge was instead on me. It was interesting to note that OS Maps had already recorded the new route even though routes diverted years ago elsewhere still show unamended.

Another application affected the Cinque Ports 100 route at Leigh Green, again for privacy & security reasons. Here the footpath had been *de facto* diverted many years ago from the definitive route which went right past the applicant's house. He now wanted people to walk round the edge of the field rather than the informal route that the previous owner had been mowing into the grass, to maximise use of the field. I objected on the grounds that the separation distance between the path in use and the house was already greater than what planning legislation would accept between new houses and that if the maximise use reason was accepted, every cross field path in the county was susceptible to being shifted to round the edge. I was invited to a site meeting and despite concerns that it would turn into an unseemly confrontation with Squire Trelawny, accepted. The squire turned out to be perfectly amiable and after a good discussion in his field, next to the B2068 making conversation challenging, after which I was ready to add road noise to the reasons why diverting round the field edge would not be enjoyable, he agreed to modify his application to match more or less the unofficial route already in use. In fact if he'd made the changes he agreed to without a formal application I doubt anyone would have complained, KCC wouldn't have gotten involved and he'd have saved the fees. A good result; and we're getting kissing gates instead of rickety stiles.

Back in Selling, a joint application involved a diversion round a new vineyard combined with a horse paddock on health & safety grounds. The horse owner asserted that it was unsafe for people and the horse for a footpath to cross the paddock, the farmer that the guys for the new trellising would be a trip hazard. Also that a break in the trellising would make it more expensive and fewer vines cause a loss of productive capacity. I objected that the health & safety reasons were spurious and if loss of productivity was accepted, no cross field footpath in the county was safe from diversion. Again a site meeting invitation was accepted to take place just after our New World Wines walk passed through newly planted vineyards around Luddesdown, where the routes of established footpaths had been respected. This time the applicant was represented by a land agent as they turned out to be Tattinger Champagne – and the PRoW officer was an acquaintance of Brian Buttifant.

Part of the vineyard had already been planted and work was underway on trellising, unexpectedly leaving the definitive route clear. Another reason cited for diversion had been that the existing orchard had overgrown the footpath and people walked round the edge anyway to which my retort was that obstruction of a footpath should not be rewarded with a diversion. Walking the route, it transpired the orchard route was passable but indistinct and unsigned which explains why I'd never been able to find it before. The officer explained that the bar that makes it expedient for the landowner's interest application to be accepted is very low and easily passed in this case. That others chose not to apply for diversions in similar circumstances, carried no weight with Inspectors. Although the enjoyment and convenience aspects are more subjective, I have found that the opinion of a council officer is always given more weight than that of a member of the public or even an elected council member. Therefore, even though the zigzag route will now be longer than walking round the road corner it currently cuts off, the objection was withdrawn. In the horse paddock KCC were insisting that several trees were cut down to achieve the full 2m width. The space between the fence & trees was better than most and more than adequate, so hopefully my plea to leave them will be heeded.

In the meantime, walking out a route south of Ashford for inclusion in the Social Walks programme had encountered 6 blockages, 5 of them deliberate. One, directly underneath a finger post, was a double metal & wood barricade preventing access to a horse paddock. The only remaining alternative was along the busy A28. Resolved to report it, when I got home it transpired that it had already been reported – 3 years earlier. So I served notice on KCC under the Highways Act 1980 of intention to apply to the Magistrates Court to have the blockage removed. When I previously did this after a gate on the Greensand Way near Sevenoaks Weald was blockaded, a PRoW manager contacted me to plead that they be given time to deal with blockages before taking that step. This time, after 3 years, they meekly copied me in on the notice they served on the landowner to remove the barricade and install a gate. If anyone's passing the AW216, on the right just before the Chilmington Green turning, please take note if anything has happened. The Social Walk has been reconfigured to avoid this area completely.

How much further do I take my route to notoriety with Kent PRoW staff? The Ramblers are on the list of informal consultees before diversion orders are issued but, despite their encouragement to get missing footpaths added to the definitive map before 2026, seem to acquiesce to every application to divert paths already on the map. The legislation is heavily loaded in favour of the landowners and although KCC claim many applications are rejected they haven't identified any that have been or the reasons why. A new Act is likely to favour landowners further. On KCC's website you have to look under Environment, Waste & Planning then Managing Public Rights of Way, which isn't exactly intuitive, to find the list of current consultations. All of which perhaps explains why there are so few representations when an application is made – and those that do write in seem to be dog walkers, happy to walk round in circles.

Having finished writing this, what should I do next? Now where's that consultation page...

I spotted a shorter alternative to Keith Warman's 'Hot Air Balloon' article from the last Newsletter, to wit:

The former prime minister, David Lloyd George, once got lost in Snowdonia. He asked a passer-by where he was. The response 'You are in Wales'. Lloyd George said that this was the perfect parliamentary answer – it was **brief, true and told no-one anything of any use.**

SNIPPETS / DID YOU HEAR?

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

As with the previous edition, material has all been sourced by the Editor, 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.

Beachy Head iconic lighthouse to be moved further inland – 20 years after first relocation

Beachy Head's lighthouse, Belle Tout – *which has featured on many a Kent Group Social Walk* – will have to be relocated further inland, its owner has said, just 20 years after it was first moved away from the cliff edge. Belle Tout is now just 20m (65ft) away from the 162m (530ft) drop near Eastbourne, East Sussex, after tonnes of chalk recently fell onto the beach below.

The lighthouse, which starred in the James Bond film 'The Living Daylights', was first moved in 1999 due to fears that erosion would see it plunge over the precipice. Engineers used 22 hydraulic jacks to shift the 850-tonne structure 17m (56ft) backwards. The latest cliff fall has prompted its owners to start planning another potentially very costly shift in position further inland.



A huge cliff fall has cut off an access path to the Belle Tout lighthouse

Google Maps suggests 'potentially fatal' route up Ben Nevis, hillwalkers warned

Scottish mountaineering charities have criticised Google for suggesting routes up Ben Nevis and other Munros they say are 'potentially fatal' and direct people over a cliff.



One route suggested to reach the summit of Ben Nevis is potentially fatal, the charities said

The John Muir Trust, which looks after the upper reaches of the UK's highest mountain, said attempts to contact the company over the issue have been met with silence. The charity said certain searches for routes up Ben Nevis on Google Maps direct users to the car park nearest the summit as the crow flies, and then indicate a walking route that is **'highly dangerous, even for experienced climbers'**. The Nevis conservation officer for the trust, said: 'The problem is that Google Maps directs some visitors to the Upper Falls car park, presumably because it is the closest car park to the summit. But this is not the correct route and we often come across groups of inexperienced walkers heading towards Steall Falls or up the south slopes of Ben Nevis believing it is the route to the summit.'

Heather Morning, Mountaineering Scotland's mountain safety adviser, said even experienced climbers would have trouble with the suggested route. 'For those new to hillwalking, it would seem perfectly logical to check out Google Maps for information on how to get to your chosen mountain,' she said. "But when you input Ben Nevis and click on the 'car' icon, up pops a map of your route, taking you to the car park at the head of Glen Nevis, followed by a dotted line appearing to show a route to the summit. Even the most experienced mountaineer would have difficulty following this route. The line goes through very steep, rocky, and pathless terrain where even in good visibility it would be challenging to find a safe line. Add in low cloud and rain the suggested Google line is potentially fatal.'

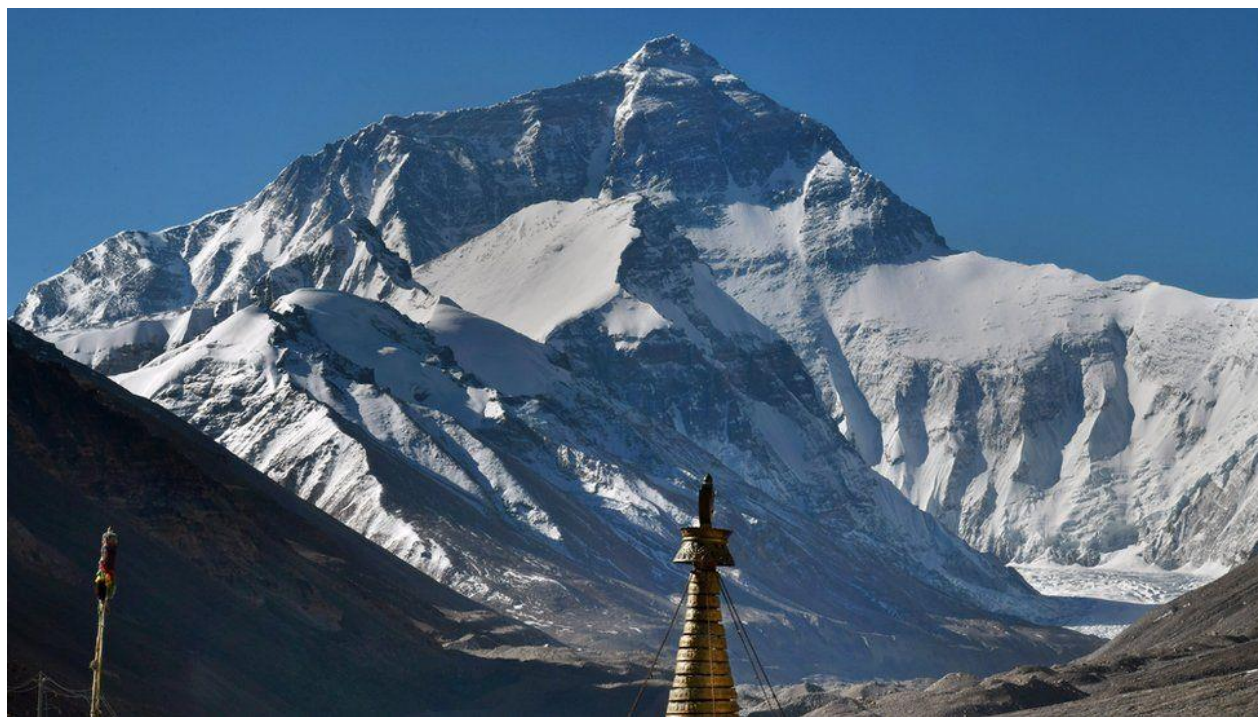
The charity said Google also directs users into 'life-threatening terrain' for other Munros. It said for An Teallach in the north-west Highlands, a walking route suggested by the search engine would take people over a cliff.

I am probably considered a little-bit old fashioned (and my phone is smarter than me), but I think that I will stick to good ol' paper maps as my primary source of information. Ed

Everest – China to set up 'separation line' at summit

China says it will set up a 'line of separation' at the summit of Mount Everest in order to prevent climbers mingling with others from Nepal

May 2021



Everest stands on the border between China and Nepal

It comes less than a week after mountaineers and authorities at base camp in Nepal warned of rising cases of Covid among climbers. It is not yet clear how China will enforce the rules on the mountain as the summit is a dome of snow with space for six people standing and, on busy days, **climbers have to queue to gain access to it.**

A team of Tibetan mountaineering guides is being dispatched to the summit to set up the line. It will be in place before the arrival of a group of Chinese climbers who are currently on their way.

Mountaineers from the Chinese side will be prohibited from having contact with anyone from the Nepal side and will not be allowed to touch objects that have been placed at the peak. It is not clear whether the Tibetan guides will remain in the area to enforce the restrictions.

The director of Tibet's Sports Bureau **told Chinese state media** that the only time that climbers from the north and south side of the mountain come in to contact is at the summit.

At present, tourists without a permit are forbidden to enter the Chinese base camp and the country has banned foreign nationals from climbing the mountain. However, Nepal, which relies heavily on income generated from Everest expeditions, has allowed foreign climbers, with about 400 permits allocated this season. More than 30 sick climbers were evacuated from the Nepalese side in recent weeks as the country faces a second coronavirus wave.