

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION — Kent Group

furthering the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking

NEWSLETTER



Andrew Melling in 1974, at the head of Dalsdalur (Iceland)



Number 116

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www.ldwa.org.uk/kent

CONTENTS

	Page.	Articles / Contributions	Thanks To	Page.
Welcome / Editorial / News	2	Summary of dates mentioned	-	6
Committee Members	3	Neal O'Rourke – 10 Q&A	-	7
Kent celebration for LDWA's 50th	3	'Postcard' from Scotland	Graham Smith	8
Kent Group Challenge Events	4	Iceland	Andrew Melling	10
Kent Group / Social Walks	4	Brenda Parker Way	David Thornton	18
Trans-Pennine 100, later 100s	5	Irish 4 Peaks	Peter Jull	20
Editor's Plea (<i>more articles needed!</i>)	5	(Walking) Snippets	Editor	23

A WARM WELCOME (*and a Happy New Year*) to the slightly delayed December 2021 edition (especially as it is now January 2022!) of the Kent Group Newsletter, and particularly to any new members – in 2022 alone there are already 17 new Primary Members, taking the total of Primary Members to around 425.

We trust that our members are enjoying good health and, being the type of people that we are, are generally taking advantage of the open air, and hence minimising interactions, wherever possible, with those conditions most likely to attract Covid. However, as I think we have all come to recognise, there could be a new mutation or sub-variant lurking around the very next corner, so we are certainly not in the clear yet, despite many (most?) of us being triple-jabbed.

Partly as a historical record, this edition reports that the **Omicron** version of Covid is – perhaps – in full flow, but with an unknown future path, having surfaced at the back end of 2021, and just *possibly* tailing off now. The ramifications for life, let alone walking, will no doubt become clear over the next few weeks but, as it stands, the **Kent Group AGM (Sunday January 30th) is going ahead as planned**, ie as an **actual** meeting. Even if some 'in person/live' events are again banned or severely restricted, hopefully any future draconian rules imposed by Government will be tempered for solo and group walking and especially for Spring and Summer LDWA Challenge Events (where indoor checkpoints can usually be kept to a minimum).

We will, of course, always strive to abide by the rules and regulations – which does of course place us on a higher plane than those living at certain addresses (not mentioning 10 Downing Street in particular! NB This is a non-political publication).

For the record, as at 16th January 2022, we have the following that is relevant (from the LDWA National Website):-

Covid-19: Latest Government Guidance - England - effective 30 November 2021 (*applying to LDWA activities*)

The new precautionary measures announced by the Prime Minister came into effect for England to protect against the new Omicron variant.

This is a reminder that **all LDWA activities in England must adhere to current local and national Government guidance.**

THE LDWA IS NOT IMPOSING ANY FURTHER RULES:

- Face coverings are legally required indoors in shops and on public transport services
- Turn away people with Covid-19 symptoms

For Challenge Events:

- Risk Assessments are required.
- Indoor locations used for challenge events must have appropriate cleaning, hygiene and ventilation in place.
- Consider displaying the NHS QR code so that walkers can check in.
- Consider using the NHS Covid pass to reduce transmission at the venue.
- Put in place a communications plan to share Covid-19 measures in place for the event. This should include an attendee code of behaviour (don't attend if you show symptoms!)
- Work closely with partners - local authorities, transport operators and safety advisory groups.

Before you do any Kent Group / Social Walk or Event (or other Kent Group activity), 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 plentiful supply of drink, especially if there is uncertainty regarding pubs or even shops being open. And bring your own hand sanitiser!

Kent Group has the Sevenoaks Circular 'inked in' for Sunday 20th March, with over 100 already entered – entry is via SIEntries. Whilst the weather in March can be unpredictable, we hope that the event can proceed without further government rules. Looking further ahead, but still within the LDWA 'community', a lot of work has already been done preparing for the Trans-Pennine 100 at the start of June, and we very much hope that this will proceed.

As previously mentioned, 'monthly' Kent Group **Committee Meetings** have continued, via Teams / Zoom, and it is envisaged that this will remain the *modus operandi* for at least the foreseeable future. We actually had a meeting free month in December, but started again last Wednesday (12th January), with the next one due on 16th February (*ie after the*)

The 2022 LDWA Kent Group Annual General Meeting is still due to be held, Covid permitting, in Godmersham* Village Hall, on **Sunday 30th January at 13:30** (*note earlier time*), finishing at 15:30, with an optional 7 or so mile walk at **10:00** and (free) buffet lunch at 13:00.

But please do **watch out for a further communication** in the next week or so, as safe practice / rules / regulations and plenty of good old common-sense could mean that matters change quickly. A Risk Assessment will be undertaken, but we believe that the Hall will facilitate good social distancing *officially, the 'Godmersham and Crundale Village Hall', on the A28 in Godmersham.

If you are planning on attending the buffet and AGM, please contact our Secretary, Helen, **ASAP**, on secretary.kent@ldwa.org.uk.

KENT GROUP COMMITTEE

CHAIR	Stephanie Le Men	<i>kent@ldwa.org.uk</i>
SECRETARY	Helen Franklin	<i>secretary.kent@ldwa.org.uk</i>
TREASURER	Peter Jull	<i>treasurer.kent@ldwa.org.uk</i>
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Membership Secretary		<i>membership.kent@ldwa.org.uk</i>
Entries Secretary		<i>entries.kent@ldwa.org.uk</i>
Member	Jim Briggs Penny Southern	Andy Clark David Thornton Nicola Foad Cathy Waters
Life President (non-Committee)	Brian Buttifant	
WebMaster (non-Committee)	Michael Headley	<i>website.kent@ldwa.org.uk</i>

My understanding is that all of the above are willing to continue in post (if you will have us, that is), and this will be subject to ratification at the forthcoming AGM.

Sadly, and due to health issues, **Nick Dockree** has now resigned from the Committee after many years of stalwart service; it was good to see him, accompanied by his son and daughter – whom he has often spoken of – at the recent Xmas / Family Lunch on 12th December. We wish Nick the best with his health.

A few extracts from the January 12th 2022 Committee meeting (*not covered elsewhere in this Newsletter*).

- **“Meetup”** – some LDWA Groups are already taking advantage of this ‘app’, and we have agreed to ‘trial’ it, to see whether attendance for our Group Social Walks increases; other LDWA Groups have experienced a small up-tick in numbers.
- **National AGM** – this conflicts with the Sevenoaks Circular Marshals Walk (6th January); we may have one volunteer (non-Committee) attending on behalf of Kent Group, and one or two others may attend ‘virtually’.
- Agreed to **promote Sevenoaks Circular** to nearby Local Groups – and ensure that there is good visibility on Facebook.
- A discussion regarding the future of the **Newsletter** was had, and it was agreed to continue with this for this next year, at least, notwithstanding the late issue of the December 2021 edition; it was considered to be valuable for keeping in touch.
- Relevant Committee Members will write a **procedure ‘manual’** (*or, more likely, just a page or two each*) for those very important tasks and dates which are currently either in people’s heads and/or now generally carried out on the computer, so that the Group is not left having to ‘re-invent the wheel’ should the relevant Committee Member be unavailable, for whatever reason. (*These tasks, such as inputting Group Walks and Challenge Events for Strider, remembering to advertise the AGM at the correct time, setting up events on SIEntries, etc don’t just happen by themselves!*)
- The **Coastal Path** between Woolwich and Grain has recently opened.

If you have any matters which you wish to raise, the next Committee Meeting is scheduled for 16th February (ie after the AGM).

LDWA 50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION (Kent participation)

Many of you will be aware, through various sources, including *Strider* magazine, that the (national) organisation is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2022. To mark this special year, all local groups up and down the UK are being encouraged to hold an event (or celebration) of their choice, to be held over the weekend of 18th / 19th June. Given that we have the High Weald Challenge just three weeks later and the 50 mile White Cliffs coming up in August, the Kent Group Committee has decided that we will keep matters relatively ‘simple’, and are arranging a “walking and social do”, on **Sunday 19th June**. The finer details are yet to be decided, but the day will likely consist of a 9-12 mile walk in the morning for those who wish to do this, followed by a gathering and picnic for all other members and their families in the afternoon. The location for this will be **Ryarsh**. The Village Hall has already been booked for the afternoon, just in case the weather isn’t favourable (*and also for the sake of conveniences!*), but it is hoped that we will be able to enjoy a fine day together outside. **ALL will be most welcome – please put the date in your diary.** NB It is intended that this occasion will double as / incorporate the normal Kent Group ‘post 100’ celebration, with entrants (and Marshals) no doubt being eager to reminisce about the proceedings from just two weeks beforehand. So, if you’ve always wanted to know the finer points of a 100, but never dared to ask, this is the opportune time!

KENT GROUP CHALLENGE EVENTS

SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR – SUNDAY 20TH MARCH 2022

This annual challenge event – the 45th ‘running’ of it – takes place on Sunday 20th March, with the Marshals event two weeks beforehand, on the 6th. The event has been loaded onto SIEntries and numbers are encouraging (over the 100 mark already, 225 maximum). The start location will be the same as in recent years, West Heath School, on the outskirts of Sevenoaks, but taking a new route with checkpoints at Heaverham, Stansted, Eynsford, Shoreham and Chipstead. Walk options are 17, 22 and 32 miles.

Any offers to help marshal the event will be very much appreciated. Even offers of just a morning or an afternoon, as opposed to a whole day, would be super. If you wish to and are able to help on the day, please email david.thornton@uk.toyota-industries.eu.

A 4 person sub-committee (comprising David, Stephanie, Helen and Andy) has been established for this event, with matters believed to be ‘well in hand’.

HIGH WEALD WALK – SUNDAY 10TH JULY 2022

The intention, at this stage, is to base this event from **Langton Green**, as originally intended in 2020 and also 2021 – how time flies! A sub-committee is being formed and the routes will be finalised and proof-walked before a Marshals Walk (likely to be on 26th June). Further details should be available in the April 2022 Newsletter. The distances are likely to be 16, 20 and 27 miles.

WHITE CLIFFS CHALLENGE – 50 MILES – SATURDAY 27TH / SUNDAY 28TH AUGUST 2022 *Bank Holiday weekend*

Few details available yet – we hope that the venue will be a new visitor centre (a provisional booking has already been made), which may well necessitate a couple of minor amendments to the previous route, ‘shortcuts’ to bring the mileage back to nearer the magical 50 mark. The April 2022 Newsletter should contain further details. As in previous years, this event should be an integral part of the White Cliffs Walking Festival.

UPCOMING GROUP / SOCIAL WALKS

As ever, Peter Jull has been working hard at arranging walks and looking for new leaders, and the confirmed programme is currently as follows, but please do refer to Peter’s regular walks emails.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Venue (Start)</u>	<u>Distance</u>	<u>Start At</u>	<u>Leader</u>
Friday 21 st January	Coldrum Night Walk	Trottiscliffe	17+	22:30	Dave Sheldrake
Sunday 6 th February	Invicta 92 Revisited Part 1	Nr Seal	20	09:00	Andy Clark
Sunday 20 th February	Via Francigena Art	Adisham	19	09:00	Peter Jull
Sunday 27 th February	Y Knot	Wye	17½	09:00	Eve Richards
<i>Sunday 6th March</i>	<i>Sevenoaks Circular MARSHALS</i>	<i>Sevenoaks</i>	<i>17,22,32</i>	<i>Contact David Thornton (see above)</i>	
Sunday 13 th March	Alliteration O – Orlestone, Oxney	Orlestone	18	09:00	Peter Jull
<i>Sunday 20th March</i>	<i>EVENT – Sevenoaks Circular</i>	<i>Sevenoaks</i>	<i>17,22,32</i>	<i>To help – or enter via SIEntries</i>	
Sunday 27 th March	Alliteration P – Platt, Plaxtol <i>plus</i>	Hadlow	19	09:00	Peter Jull
Sunday 3 rd April	Invicta 92 Revisited Part 2	Yalding	23½	09:00	Andy Clark

We will definitely have our ‘traditional’ Good Friday walk, **“A South Downs Loop”**, on **15th April**, from Eastbourne – all start together, then split so that there are two distances, 20 and 26 miles to be led by Nicola and David, respectively; confirmation to follow via website and emails.

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

Since the last Newsletter (in August 2021), we have had a number of Group / Social Walks, including an ‘Art & Pizza’ walk led by Jim Briggs (the pizza being home cooked, very tasty, on an outdoors oven), and walks in the south, north, and east of Kent, plus one primarily in Surrey and just ‘kissing’ south west Kent, crossing also into West Sussex. Nicola Foad led a walk on New Year’s Day and Dave Sheldrake led his normal post Xmas stroll from Shipbourne.

We also had a successful White Cliffs Challenge at the end of August – for a Report on that, please refer to the December 2021 *Strider*, page 40 (or the Kent Group website). Many thanks to the various Marshals who kindly gave of their time.

The Kent Group Committee (and the LDWA generally) is still 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. There are two upcoming Walking Festivals, where we certainly hope to have a presence, although details are yet to be confirmed. First is the Canterbury Walking Festival, with an LDWA walk likely taking place on **Sunday 24th April**, and secondly the Elham Valley Walking Festival with an LDWA walk pencilled in for **Sunday 28th May** – looking even further ahead, there is the White Cliffs Walking Festival at the end of August (incorporating our White Cliffs Challenge), and September’s High Weald Walking Festival.

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.

2022 – THE TRANS-PENNINE 100

Kent Group, always keen to help other Groups (*in the hope that they will reciprocate!*), will be manning Checkpoint 9, at Hope Sports Club (and so this will be indoors), some 58 miles into the event, from 21:45 (Friday 3rd) to 12:21 (Saturday 4th); this is the checkpoint immediately before the Breakfast Stop and, accordingly, we have been told that we will be serving ‘simple’ food. No doubt we will be busy, actively encouraging any who are showing signs of fatigue etc to ‘gird their loins’ and stagger the next 5+ miles to Breakfast, at Hathersage. The *previous* checkpoint to ours will be found some 4 miles earlier, at Mam Tor car park (and this will be outside, and overnight); in addition to manning our own checkpoint, therefore, we may also be assisting our colleagues from Heart of Scotland Group at Mam Tor, with the provision of flasks of hot water etc.

For those who may be tempted by the thought of a 100 in this beautiful countryside, the final closing date for entries is Monday 18th April, assuming that the 550 entry limit has not been reached by then; there are some 475 already entered, including those who are still to pay, or perhaps complete their 50 mile qualifier.

The LDWA website now shows the following:-

- The Trans-Pennine 100 will be organised by Vermayden Group in 2022, the LDWA's 50th anniversary year. *Note the dates: Friday 3 June to Sunday 5 June.*
- In 2023 the event will be the Elephant, Bear and Bull 100.
- North of Scotland Group will organise The Speyside 100 in 2024. It will be based in the Inverness/Moray area.
- The 2025 East Point Hundred will be hosted by Norfolk & Suffolk Group, the first time the 100 will have visited East Anglia.
- And in 2026 Kent Group will welcome walkers to the South East for their Hunnypot Hundred.

Details regarding the Hunnypot Hundred are currently unconfirmed, but you (or more likely any children/grandchildren) might well be on the correct compass bearing in surmising that the reference to ‘Hunny’ indicates that the event is scheduled to pass through Ashdown Forest and, Yes, over Pooh Bridge itself (though not the original bridge (see later)).

We have recently been contacted by Surrey Walking Club (*whose membership includes quite a few LDWA members*) to wit:-

Weald Way – Surrey Walking Club

Fellow walkers. Over **Easter 2022** the Surrey Walking Club will be walking The Wealdway and you are extremely welcome to join us for as many or few days as you like. This is an 83 mile LDP that links the Thames Estuary to the English Channel so it is the south-east's very own coast-to-coast path. It crosses through three AONBs, makes a full traverse of Ashdown Forest and links the North Downs Way to the South Downs Way, finishing in Eastbourne.

Our outing is also commutable from London as each day begins and ends at a train station. Alternatively, you may wish to stay overnight *en route*. Pleasingly, it gets easier as the weekend progresses!

The dates, routes and leaders are below:

Friday 15th April	– Gravesend to Tonbridge	– 28 miles	– Gavin Fuller
Saturday 16th April	– Tonbridge to Buxted	– 22.5 miles	– Kate Copeland
Sunday 17th April	– Buxted to Berwick	– 17.5 miles	– Lynne McKenzie
Monday 18th April	– Berwick to Eastbourne	– 14 miles	– Gavin Fuller

Non-members are welcome. Membership is required should you wish to walk with us for more than 3 days. We can collect your £5 subs en route. A lot can change between now and then, but this is the plan for now!

Kate and Lynne, Walks Secretaries (Any questions to Kate – stroll@surreywalkingclub.org.uk)

The eagle-eyed amongst you will have already spotted that you will not be able to do both Kent Group's traditional Good Friday Walk and the Gravesend to Tonbridge section as shown above – choices, choices!

Editor's Comments – plea for more articles

‘*Après le deluge*’ of the Virtual Y 100 Sir Fynwy articles in the August 2021 edition, comes a veritable drought (in quantity, albeit not in quality), and more articles and contributors are desperately(?) needed for the next edition – so, *please*, do pen something in good time for the end of March 2022 (*April 2022 Newsletter*) and end of July 2022 (*August 2022 Newsletter*). As ever, thank you to those who have provided articles.

As clearly demonstrated by Andrew Melling's splendid, awe-inspiring, Icelandic adventure, **it doesn't matter how long ago your adventure, how far away, or how tenuous a connection there is to Kent** or to walking, there's a very good chance of your article making it into ‘print’; I cannot promise always to include everything, but will try (and especially if you have a photo or two, or more) And, you never know, a good photo may well have you on the front page, for eternity!

Now comes a threat – if you don't supply ‘copy’, then I may need to write about some of *my* walking adventures – and I am sure that these will be of little interest to anybody else!

Any errors, omissions and inconsistencies in this edition are mine; and any comments are owned by the Editor and do not necessarily represent the views of the wider Kent Group Committee.

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

Neil Higham, Newsletter Editor, 16th January 2022

A **SUMMARY / ROUND-UP** of the **IMPORTANT DATES** mentioned in this Newsletter

DATE	WHAT'S HAPPENING?	VENUE
Sunday 30th January	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING at 13:30	Godmersham
Sunday 6th March	Sevenoaks Marshals Walk, for those able to help on the day itself	Sevenoaks
Sunday 20th March	Sevenoaks Circular EVENT – help required	Sevenoaks
End of March	<i>'Copy' required for April Newsletter</i>	n/a
Friday 3rd June	Trans-Pennine 100; Kent checkpoint	Hope (Derbyshire)
Sunday 19th June	50 th Anniversary Day (+ Trans-Pennine 100 'post mortem')	Ryarsh
Sunday 26th June	High Weald Marshals	Langton Green
Sunday 10th July	High Weald Walk EVENT	Langton Green
End of July	<i>'Copy' required for August Newsletter</i>	n/a
Saturday 27th August	White Cliffs Challenge 50 EVENT	tbc

THE 2021 VIRTUAL Y 100 SIR FYNWY

(brief postscript)

Brian Buttifant, our Life President wrote:-

"I found reading the many virtual 100 reports in the August Newsletter most enthralling, having had a deep interest in our annual 100 over the last forty plus years. The detailed write ups of Kent participants recalls many of our own experiences and I can empathise with the feelings, anxiety, the pain, endurance and the final elation of it all. Added to this, in this year, when members had to devise their own routes, as I remember, the wonderful support of checkpoints and a friendly face is a great help to us.

With no checkpoints the support of group members, family and friends was an enormous help to the walkers - so well done everybody, whether walking or supporting. I was sorry I was not able to offer help* but it was certainly in my thoughts that weekend. Hopefully I can get back to 100 checkpointing in Derbyshire, the County of my 10th hundred."

* *Brian, you did help me with cold water at Ide Hill, which I was very grateful for, even if I only got to the 50 mile mark – Editor*

Jill Green sent me some interesting information – especially if you like bats! As you may recall, Jill and Jim undertook their 2021 Virtual 100 walking around and across the Isle of Wight, and they walked in aid of the IW Bat Hospital, to which I understand some Kent Group members sent donations. As Jill says "after all, we do share walking at night with the local bat population".

Did you know that there are 18 (known) different kinds of bat in the UK (although some of these are occasional visitors, only, to these shores)? A quarter of a century ago, Jill – who is passionate about wildlife – was instrumental in the IW Bat Hospital being established, since when around 2,500 bats have been rescued. If you want to get to learn more about bats, can I suggest that you tag along on a walk with 80 year-old Jill (if you can keep up with her, that is!)

In case you missed it – In late November last year, there was a cyber attack on the main LDWA website, which also 'took out' most Local Group websites; thankfully, all was restored by Sunday 28th (November).



As alluded to in the notice (left) – and as specifically mentioned in an LDWA email from Julie Cribb, NEC Chair, on 30th November 2021 – it is recommended that you **reset your (LDWA) password** following the cyber attack. *The 20th December 2021 Kent Group Communication email also refers, and contains relevant links.*

We are very sorry to announce that this LDWA web-site was subjected to a cyber-attack yesterday, Friday 26 November. We took prompt action to protect this web-site by closing it so that we could investigate the impact and origins of the breach. In conjunction with our IT support company, our initial findings indicate that there is no evidence of data theft and that the attack was limited.

We fully appreciate that this will cause concern across the LDWA community and sincerely apologise for the inconvenience caused. We will update members as soon as we can. We recommend that you should have different passwords for every web-site and that your devices are suitably protected with anti-virus and malware software. To ensure transparency and openness, we will be alerting and reporting the attack on the website to the ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) in due course.

Unfortunately, these forms of attack are common, but our volunteers and IT support company have reacted promptly and we have secure back-ups of this web-site. It will take a little while to restore this web-site, but this will be done as soon as we can after some additional testing. We will also keep this web-site up-to-date with further information about this incident.

This is an opportune time for us to remind you all that only **YOU** – or the National Membership Secretary – can make any changes to your Membership details, such as change of address, telephone number, and even email address; whilst one or two of us at local level have access to this information, we cannot make any changes for you, although we may be able to steer you in the right direction.

NEAL O'ROURKE – 10 Q & A

If anyone qualifies for the moniker of “Kent Group Stalwart”, then undoubtedly Neal O'Rourke is right up there with the best. Neal (with his wife, Jan) leads various walks and he and Jan put on the annual “Cream Teas Walk” each summer. Additionally, Neal (and Jan) successfully organised the Kent Group Summer High Weald Event for a good number of years.

1. **When did you join the LDWA?** I joined the LDWA in October 1985.
2. **How did you hear about the organisation?** I joined the Ramblers Association in about July 1984, and went out on one of their walks in January 1985. Met a lady called Val Brissenden, who explained what they about, and said she and her husband Mike were doing the South Downs Marathon in two weeks' time; the rest is history. When I joined the LDWA later that year, I met Paul Hatcher (*a previous Kent Group Chairman*) and he was my walking partner for a number of years on Events etc.
3. **Where was your first Social Walk, and any other memories of this day?** The first Social Walk I was on started from Oxted, led by John Probert (sadly no longer with us). I also remember then that it was not just the husbands, but their wives as well who were on the walks, which was a bit of a rarity in those days.
4. **Where was your first Challenge Event, and any other memories of this day?** My first Challenge Event was the Gatliff Marathon from Parson's Pightle, Old Coulsdon, nr Croydon in 1985. Lovely sunny day and the Route Description was very good, also I believe then the mileage was more accurate than sometimes of late. I do not remember any excess mud up there either! You had to complete the distance in the allotted time, or no certificate was awarded in the early years, as some may remember.
5. **What is your favourite (Social Walk or) Challenge Event?** Rather than having just one favourite Challenge Event, I have a number, which are the Winter Tanners, Punchbowl, Stansted Stagger, Poppyline 50, Red Rose 50 – and I always enjoyed the Surrey Summits etc (*these were 100K, ie 62.5 miles*).
6. **When walking a Hundred, what have been your highest and lowest moments?** I do not remember having a low moment as such. However, I do remember my first 100 which was the 1986 Downsman, when I was walking with Paul Hatcher and he was having blister problems, so I was going ahead and waiting for his arrival. Nearing the end, I stepped back on the track when a sharp pain in my knee occurred, forcing me to hobble the last six miles or so to the finish. I have had a few high moments, including with Jan – the Punchbowl Marathon, 31 miles in 7.5 hrs some time ago, and the Oxon 40 in 10.12; on a Hundred, this would be just myself on the North Yorks 100 in 34.25 more recently.
7. **What is the strangest sight you have seen on an LDWA walk?** The strangest thing I saw on a social walk, led I believe by Keith Warman (he will probably remember), was when we encountered a lavatory pan on the side of a track; Keith asked Shirley Higgins to sit on it for a photo. I am not sure if this photo still exists
8. **What is your favourite (non-Kent) walking area?** The best walking area? I would say most places, ie West Country, Wales, Scotland, Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Shropshire & Lancashire.
9. **What do you think is the best thing about the LDWA?** The best thing about the LDWA is all the friends we meet, be it on Social Walks or Challenge Events. To me, we are all one BIG family.
10. **Who do you walk LDWA Events with most often (if anybody)?** On Events I walk with my wife, Jan, of course.

In memoriam

Jenny Sinclair

We received the sad news that Jenny passed away recently, having been ill since September last year. Jenny was the widow of Tom (Sinclair), former LDWA National Secretary (1999-2002) and then Chair (2003-2006), as well as having been the Kent Group Secretary and also a predecessor of this parish (ie the Kent Newsletter Editor) – *and I just know that Tom would never have countenanced a newsletter being late!* Tom passed away in June 2010 at the age of 74.

Jenny was a staunch supporter of Tom with his many LDWA roles, and I remember well many occasions when Jenny kindly (and cheerfully) provided refreshments for Committee Meetings which for a time (and on an odd occasion thereafter) were held at their home in Wrotham, just a few doors from the “Rose and Crown” (where regular ‘first Monday of the month’ evening pub meets have been held – well, at least they were prior to March 2020). And Jenny ‘represented’ Kent Group (and the LDWA more generally) when she and Tom happened to chance upon our Monarch on her Balmoral estate in the summer of 2008, exchanging pleasantries whilst discussing ‘troublesome corgis’ and where to walk.

For those who are interested, we understand that there will be a commemoration service (the word ‘funeral’ wasn’t mentioned) at Wrotham Church at **2:30 pm on Friday, 4th February**, with a possibility of some refreshments afterwards. Daughter, Sally, has intimated that she is happy for anyone to just turn up should they so wish.

Les Preston

On a similar sad note, Kent Group members will be saddened to learn of the death from Covid of Les Preston, who organised car parking arrangements at our (Dover) headquarters, the Duke of York's Royal Military School, during the Cinque Ports 100 in 2018 – and once the event had commenced, Les willingly assisted HQ staff in dropping off provisions at some of the checkpoints.



Les, who would have turned 80 next month, was a stalwart of the White Cliffs Ramblers – to which several Kent LDWA members belong – and the White Cliffs Walking Festival, which he helped to set up in 2014. He was a lynchpin of the festival's organising group and also served as vice-chairman of Kent Ramblers. Last year he was presented with a Ramblers Volunteer Award, signed by then national chairwoman Kate Ashbrook, for outstanding services to walking.

Former Kent Group Chairman, Graham Smith, who served with Les on the committees of the White Cliffs Ramblers, the White Cliffs Walking Festival and Kent Ramblers, has written an obituary of Les, which appeared in the most recent edition of South East Walker, sent out to Ramblers' members in the South East with their Walk magazine.

Thoughts are with his daughter Sarah and son Adrian at this sad time.

Here Les is being presented with his Ramblers Volunteer Award by White Cliffs Ramblers Secretary, Helena Trevelyan

POSTCARD FROM SCOTLAND from GRAHAM SMITH (*recent Kent Chair*)

For those new to this continuing theme: Graham – the current Strider Editor – and his wife moved from Deal to Tain in early 2021. Graham has supplied a regular 'postcard' of his various walking adventures to and on the hills of Scotland for some years.

This 'postcard' was received 17th October 2021, so slightly 'dated' now (with apologies from the current Newsletter Editor)

Greetings from beautiful Scotland, Kent friends.

Sarah and I have been up here for almost a year now – doesn't that seem amazing? We have settled in well and have both been quite busy. Tain is a very nice town, full of friendly people, which has quite a lot going on, the landscape is majestic (I tend to run out of adjectives to describe Scotland) and it is good to see our youngest daughter regularly. Jessica lives about 400 yards away, which is probably the minimum distance she would want between her and her mum and dad (even if we do dog sit for her three dogs every day). Sarah has just started working for one day a week at the Highland Hospice shop here, and she has also done some unpaid PR work for Tain Development Trust.

Sadly, I have not been able to do anything like as much walking up here as I would like this year, and that's ironic, because I consider Scotland provides the best walking in the world (in my totally biased view). I badly sprained my Achilles tendon in July, and am now 11 weeks into a 12-week rest prescribed by the Tain physiotherapist, as well as doing regular stretching exercises. It has been most frustrating, but I have just had to put up with it. In the first weeks, it was difficult to walk anywhere, but since then the Achilles has gradually improved, and I am now doing walks of 11-14 miles. I am hoping to do the Great Glen Way, 79 miles from Fort William to Inverness, next month, and that will be over 4-5 days.

Last week I did my first proper hill walk since the injury – Scaraben, a 2053 ft Graham (Scottish hills of 2,000-2,499 feet) a few miles west of Dunbeath in Caithness. There are three summits on Scaraben – the main one, East Scaraben and West Scaraben. It was a great walk, which I hope to take some of my Kent friends on some time. The guidebook recommended 3 hours 50 minutes and I took 4 hours 20 minutes. Given the Achilles and the wet conditions, I was very pleased. The walk didn't give me much trouble, so I'm definitely on the mend.

Then a few days after that Eve Richards and her husband Jock came up to visit us, and I took Eve on part of a walk I have led for North of Scotland LDWA called TO THE LIGHTHOUSE. The whole walk is 18 miles but that sort of distance was a bit much for me then, so we did eight, walking from the village of Inver to Tarbat Ness, a wonderful promontory with Dornoch Firth on one side and Moray Firth on the other. It's a fantastic spot, one of my favourite places since moving up here. Of course, it was a completely different type of walk to Scaraben, as it was flat. Again, the Achilles held up well, although at times I had a little trouble keeping up with Eve! And it was absolutely great for Sarah and myself to see Eve and Jock.

While I was not walking, I thought I would make myself useful by working, so I did some vegetation clearance work on parts of the John O'Groats Trail (this is a 147 mile long distance path which starts in Inverness and I'll let you guess where it ends). I'm a warden on the trail, and my 'patch' is from Alness to Golspie, which is about 36 miles, taking in Tain. I did a bit of footpath clearance work with the Ramblers in Kent, and I brought my loppers and slasher up here. I worked on two stretches, occasionally with a guy called Alan Young, someone I have met up here and with whom I have done some great hill walks. We were clearing a lot of gorse near Embo and that was really hard, and I cleared a lot of bracken by Loch Fleet. Bracken is pretty easy to shift once you get cracking with the slasher. Loch Fleet is another of my favourite spots since moving up here. It's so peaceful and serene, and when the tide is out you can see scores of seals.

Just before my injury I did some wonderful hill walks, so let me tell you about some of them. At the end of June I had an absolutely wonderful day on Ben Mor Coigach - over on the west coast, just above Ullapool - with Alan Young. Ben Mor Coigach isn't a Munro and at 2438ft, it's not even a Corbett. But it must be one of the best hill walks in Scotland, containing the best ridge I have ever been lucky enough to walk. Unfortunately, we had cloud at about 1200ft for the best part of two hours after we started, so we couldn't really enjoy that ridge at its very best. But then the cloud lifted and the sun came out, and it was quite magical, with sweeping views across northern Scotland and out to the islands. And one of the great things about that walk is that the initial climb to that ridge is nice and steady and not too steep, so you are not cream crackered when you get to the top. It was the second time I had walked Ben Mor Coigach (the first time was with my Kent LDWA friends Mike Pursey and Mike Ratcliff some 10 years ago) and it was Alan's first. It certainly won't be my last.



In early June I went up Seana Bhraigh - the only Munro I've climbed since moving up here. At 3041 feet, it isn't one of the biggest Munros, but it's certainly one of the most remote, and involves a long walk-in from whichever direction it is tackled. At the suggestions of Alan Young and John Henderson (from North of Scotland LDWA), I approached the mountain from the north-east, driving along a good private road into the Corriemulzie estate before parking and setting off on a fine long path up Strath Mulzie. The beauty of this approach is that you can really appreciate the profile of the mountain. There were two climbs, and they really weren't too steep and arduous. The views from the summit - particularly across to those magnificent hills to the north - are quite breathtaking, and made the effort worthwhile (as always). Seana Bhraigh is a great hill, and one I must climb again (probably from the same direction).

Graham on Seana Bhraigh

And at the end of May I did one of the classic Scottish hill walks - Suilven. I went with Alan Young and we met

Brian Stalker and his Cairn Terrier, Sam (a fantastically fit little dog) *en route*. At 2399 feet, Suilven isn't even a Corbett, let alone a Munro - but what a hill. There is a delightful walk-in to the foot of the hill, then a very stiff climb to the saddle and then the final push - involving a little very mild scrambling - to the summit, where we were rewarded with some absolutely amazing views across the north of Scotland in all directions. What's more, we had lovely sunny weather. We decided not to do Suilven's sub tops, which would have involved some more serious scrambling. Suilven was all I had been hoping for, and more.

I have also done some marvellous hill walks on Meall Mor, a 2421 ft Graham in Glen Glass, and Struie and Struie Hill, which are only a few miles from Tain. Struie is only 1224 feet but it's a wonderful panoramic viewpoint and the ridge - just over a mile long - which connects with Struie Hill (1085 feet) ranks among the best I have walked.

Apart from this I have been getting to know my colleagues in North of Scotland LDWA and, as many of you know, we put on our Laich O'Moray 50-miler over the weekend of October 9-10. We had 46 entries, 37 starters and four retirements so - considering just how far north we are - we were pleased. We are just starting to plan our (LDWA) Speyside 100 for 2024 and we have a very good venue for it, just outside Aviemore. Julie Cribb has asked me to organise the Marshals' Walk, so I will probably be asking Stephanie Le Men for some advice!



Scaraben



Suilven

Talking of the current Kent Group Chairwoman, in August I had lunch in Inverness with Stephanie and Helen Franklin after they had done a big chunk of the Cape Wrath Trail, wild camping all the time - goodness me, they are tough. It was lovely to catch up with them and to hear all the Kent news.

And before I close, I have to say that I was a very proud former chairman of the group when I heard that the Andredsweald and the White Cliffs Challenge went ahead. The Andredsweald was the first LDWA event to go ahead after lockdown, and it was quite a brave decision to stage both walks, particularly when quite a few other groups shied away from taking the plunge. I was so pleased to hear that both events were successful, so a huge well done to everyone involved.

Well, my friends, I have gone on for long enough, and I had better close this POSTCARD FROM SCOTLAND now. I look forward to seeing some of you in a couple of months.

Happy walking!

Graham

(Graham, you have been very busy – and in fact I already have your ‘postcard’ for the April 2022 Newsletter; your endorsements of the various hills have certainly got me salivating, for Suilven if nowhere else – Editor)



Graham plus Col at Portmahomack



Graham on Ben Mor Coigach

ICELAND

ANDREW MELLING

PROLOGUE

Scouting and walking make good bedfellows. By the time I was 14, I had already walked through the night at least once. On becoming a Rover Scout at age 18, I was able to enter 'The London 50', an annual challenge walk for teams of four Rovers. It had alternated between the Chilterns and Kent but the two events I entered were both based in a Scout Headquarters in Sevenoaks. Kent was an unknown quantity, so we mounted an expedition from Palmers Green to get in some local training. The event was held in late November and it was wet. The two older members of the team retired during the night leaving me and Mike. He was fit enough to finish but retired because he was planning to drive to Bridgnorth to see his girlfriend!

We were happy we could walk 50 miles so why not the Fellsman next year? Mike left me behind on the first hill but when I caught him up at the top he announced he was shattered and would retire at the next roadside checkpoint. I soldiered on until after dark when the group I had been joined with could not find a checkpoint in a small bivouac on the moor. Going on to the next checkpoint, we were of course told that we could not qualify as finishers without going back and finding the missed checkpoint. We could walk on nevertheless for an unrecognised completion. I could have done that just to be company for a girl whose completion would not have been recognised anyway as girls were not allowed to enter the Fellsman in 1966. On reflection, I regret not having done so.

Mike did not enter any more events with me (probably too busy commuting to Bridgnorth!) but I entered the London 50 again in April 1968 (postponed from the year before because of foot and mouth) with Keith in the team. We came third out of three finishing teams from a field of thirteen. Time passed and we thought of The Four Inns Walk, another challenge for teams of four Scouts. But who would join us? Howard was introduced to me having moved down from York and with a Scouting background. He was up for the challenge and thought his friend Dennis in York would join us. We entered the event in 1969 in heavy snow but the challenge got the better of me. However, the four of us got on well and we continued to enter events and meet for other walks, even after Keith had moved out to Suffolk, Howard to Nottinghamshire and Dennis to Glasgow.

(Iceland) GETTING THERE (in 1974)

Dennis and I were attracted to walking tours in Iceland that had been organised for some years by Dick Phillips of Alston, Cumberland. We were able to book two tours consecutively, making a four week holiday. My journey was in several stages: bus, tube and train to Glasgow, where Dennis collected me from the station; late night taxi ride to the airport, wishing our driver would spend more time looking ahead than quizzing us on our trip; my first ever flight, on a Boeing 727, to Keflavik; coach to Reykjavik; Fokker Friendship to Isafjordur in the far north west; mini coach to the port of Bolungarvik; fishing boat to Hesteyri; and finally a dinghy transit on to the shingle beach, with some of us keeping our feet dry. This latter operation took an hour, the dinghy having to make several trips from ship to shore with us and all our gear. Our base was a former shop in a deserted fishing village. One of Dick Phillips' team bringing much of our equipment missed the boat so we ate our first meal of chops, peas and potatoes out of mugs. Cooking was on stoves in the centre of the upper floor with our mixed party of 15 or so arranged radially, sleeping with feet to the centre.



Bolungarvik – loading the boat



And finally to the shore



Base camp in Hesteyri

HESTEYRI

A limbering walk along the coast was arranged for our first morning but we were all keen to show how fit we were and sped off, to the leader's amazement. All that is left of the village we came to is the church and rectory, outside which we lunched. On our way back, we stopped to gather wild rhubarb. In the meanwhile, our bathroom facilities were being arranged. The hole was dug by the corner of a building, just out of sight of our base. In the absence of screening, embarrassment was avoided by placing a piece of red tuff tape (found there) in a prominent position to show occupation. One hand had to be kept free to protect the head from a pair of arctic terns who did not want us so close to their nest. Another team member came with skyr, a natural yoghurt in one mass, wrapped in greaseproof paper. 'Skyr' is pronounced a bit like 'scour' perhaps in recognition of the effect it might have on one's insides. Certainly, with that and the rhubarb, no one suffered from constipation!

Next day, we were issued with tents, stoves, a set of mess tins between two, and food including chocolate bars. Mars Bars were the most sought after as the local chocolate had little taste. (*Dennis had brought food on behalf of the organisers, who paid our taxi fare to the airport in return.*) With the addition of Alan, we set off to cross the Hesteyri peninsula traversing what looked on the map to be a fine ridge all the way to Kogur. Half way along Hesteyrifordur by the water's edge we were forced up through dense undergrowth but were rewarded with a view of splendid waterfalls. On the top, the sun was still hot but the wind was freezing when we stopped. The ridge was more of a plateau but the views were still worthwhile. Nor was it continuous: we had several awesome bealachs* to negotiate. It was getting late and the ridge ahead appeared progressively more difficult so we descended early and came upon a chalet-type house crammed full of holidaymaking Icelanders who, though having very little English (and we no Icelandic), invited us in for coffee and cakes and other delicacies. Leaving somewhat later, we were pleased not to need our tent being able to spend the night in one of the seamen's rescue huts available for use by travellers, when not occupied by seamen in need of rescue on this arctic coast.

** bealach – commonly, a 'narrow mountain pass'*



Midnight Sun



Lunch at the rectory



Hesteyri base, river, bathroom



Seamen's rescue hut, Kogur



Retrospect of the impassable ridge



To Kogur (up the dark side)

The hut was close by the seashore and directly beneath Kogur which we climbed before departing below the ridge that had earlier defeated us. Then we followed round the bay, releasing views of sections of the ridge over which we had walked the day before. Through the valley flowed a fair-sized river (being in fact meltwater from snowfields in the interior) which we had to ford. As we were removing our boots and socks to test the depth of the water, our holidaymaking friends from the day before hailed us from their rubber dinghy and gave us a lift across. This was fortunate – as the 'ford' proved to be six or seven feet deep. On the other side, we stopped for lunch with Kogur in the background and the hut a small orange speck beneath. Siesta was soon over and then we had a stiff climb in the late evening, getting back to Hesteyri at 2.00 am but still in broad daylight and in shorts and short-sleeved shirts. On the way, though, I had lost my footing on a small ice slope putting my watch out of action, and we had all forded a wide and deep river; for the rest of the holiday, I lost all sense of time.



Part of our previous day's ridge walk



Lunch – after the 'dinghy rescue'

Our next expedition was to the lighthouse at Latravik, the lighthouse keeper being the only permanent resident on the peninsula. I called this our Great Ridge Expedition and it looked a fine walk stretching ahead of us. There was a big difference from ridges at home. I would reach out to a flake a yard square to steady myself and feel it coming away in my hand! We had to abandon the ridge but made the lighthouse, not of the design I am familiar with. There was displayed a life-size photo of a polar bear which must have swum across from the arctic, to an undignified end. On our way back, there was a glorious sunset over Hornvik, followed by heavy rain. It stayed dull for our final gathering at Hesteyri with farewells, from the four of us going on to Pingeyri, to the rest who were going home.



A strenuous climb for me



Starting our great ridge expedition



The ridge that defeated us



Lighthouse at Latravik



Hesteyri – end of first part

PINGEYRI

Our base this time was a deserted farmhouse near the coast about 14 km north-west of the town of Píngeyri. Most of this party were in Iceland for the first time so the four of us made a tight group which Dick Phillips christened 'the Hesteyrii'. Joining Dennis and me were Albert, whose friend had been free only for the Hesteyri part, and Pat, a remarkable English girl who worked teaching music in Norway and had come to Iceland from a backpacking adventure on Svalbard. We nicknamed her 'the ice

maiden' because it was rumoured that she bathed each morning in a glacial stream although, of course, we gentlemen did not witness that. For our first expedition, we explored the Pingeyri peninsula, following the coast round to Dalsdalur where we made camp. Next day, we climbed up on to the ridge – *see photo on front cover* – gaining spectacular views of valleys, waterfalls and distant fjords before returning to base. On our rest day, we climbed Hundshorn.

For our next expedition, we were taken by Range Rover round Dyrafjordur to Nessdalur where we camped for three nights. On the first morning, in a personal melancholy, I lay in bed while the others explored the beach. In pencil, on the back of a chocolate bar wrapper, I wrote:

*Lying in my tent as the sun's last glow
Throws pink and purple shades upon the clouds
And Arctic rollers beat the rocks below
Two thousand miles from London's stifled crowds,
I revel in my splendid loneliness.
And yet...*

Later, the others showed me a fulmar's nest they had found low on the cliff. Staying out of range, we got it to demonstrate its defence strategy of expelling with some force a foul sticky substance from its stomach – and something equally foul from the other end.



Dalsdalur camp



After a day exploring the nearby coast, we headed right round the peninsula to Saebol, on Onundarfjordur, where a burnt out wreck told the story of a failed fishing community. From there we made our way up Brekkudalur high into the hills for one night's camp at the head of Gerdhamradalur, before descending Nupsdalur to catch the weekly bus at a road junction near Nupur. We couldn't afford to be late getting there! An open truck came along and we hitched a ride nearly all the way in to Pingeyri.

This was a good call. We learnt later that the bus driver had taken a commission to ferry guests to a wedding reception and there was to be no bus that week. All this trip it had been sunny and warm, so the opportunity for an ice cream in Pingeyri was most welcome. It was like no ice cream I had ever had. I cannot describe the flavour but, for the rest of the year, it would return at random, unbidden, into my mouth.

Skjoldur behind our Dalsdalur camp



Waterfalls in Lokinhamradalur



Waiting for the bus that never came



Cliffs at Nessdalur, beyond base camp



Yes, the same tents in view

By arrangement, we phoned base to be picked up and were taken to the other side of the peninsula to another deserted farmhouse at Stapadalur to stay for the rest of the holiday. Not only were large sections of render missing from the outside but our communal bedroom, bare of any decoration, had plaster missing from the laths in many places. Near Stapadalur was the highest peak in the north-west fiords, Kaldbakur, 1,000 metres courtesy of the summit cairn. From here, we had truly panoramic views. On another day, we walked along the coast to Hrafnaborg, almost as far as our earlier camp at Dalsdalur. There had been three farms along here but access to the last was by footpath only. We learnt something about the Icelandic telephone system. All calls were free, even international calls. These three farms were on one line with the operator cranking a handle to cause a ring: one ring for the first farm, two for the second and three for the third. I guess there was little the farmers did not know about their neighbours.



Stapadalur, our new base



The conqueror of Kaldbakur

All too soon, it was time to be taken back to Arnarnupur, with a last night bonfire on the beach, and then to Reykjavik. The plan was to return overland but, during our holiday, a new airport had been opened at Pingeyri and we were given a choice. Seeing more of Iceland, even just from a bus, had its attractions but Dennis and I elected to fly back. The airport buildings were limited to a single portacabin, half as offices and half as departure lounge. The runway was compacted stone. As the aircraft approached, a large fire extinguisher was wheeled out on something like a golf trolley. It all worked! Flying gave us time to explore Reykjavik, staying in a youth hostel. As well as the sightseeing, we found somewhere to have our first proper wash for a month - not in a sauna, as you might think, but in a Turkish bath. It was interesting to see how much of our colour was tan and how much just dirt.

EPILOGUE

Forty years passed before, in **2016**, I returned to Hesteyri, this time from the comfort of MV Minerva, docked at Isafordur. The boat crossing was as long as I remembered it, but now with a bar, and seats. Hesteyri had sprouted a jetty and tourist boats were anchored offshore, their human cargo sprinkled across the shingle. There was a café, with proper toilets, and a campsite. There were no tents, but the facilities were open. I walked up beside the river and should have liked to have gone further, over the ridge, but there was no time. I vainly tried to imagine myself back in 1974, but it felt good being there. I wandered the beach collecting shells to partner those I collected on the beach at Constanza, on my last holiday with my wife. I doubt I shall see Hesteyri again.



Hesteyri in 2016



At the back of Hesteyri



Campsite facilities, 2016 (even now, no privacy at this washbasin!)

PS Andrew supplied 66 photos in total, far too many unfortunately to be published (and printed) here. Andrew nominated certain ones, but entrusted the Editor with the final choice for which ones to include. If you wish to see more, then I have the full disc and this can be passed around, or perhaps contact Andrew directly – Editor

PPS The Editor usually diligently checks place names (and other facts) before publication – these Icelandic names have been taken on trust!

In the summer of 1971, my family joined the throngs of people migrating out of London and moved to a village called Tadley in North Hampshire. This was towards the end of the great motorway building era, with the M3, up to Winchester, having been completed that same year. My grandparents at that time lived in Southampton and being one of those unfortunate children who suffered terribly from bouts of travel sickness, there was nothing quite like pointing the nose of my dad's car on three lanes of pristine and almost perfectly straight tarmac to help avert it's onset.

However, travel trauma was always just a short debate away, as the inevitable choice of route to Southampton was argued over on a Saturday morning, as my parents piped up "shall we go the motorway way or the country way?". Too often the outcome was not favourable and so the roller coaster of a journey began. On occasions, as my dad persisted in taking even the sharpest hairpin bend in his Morris Minor in fourth gear, my mum would be desperately propping up the dashboard trying to prevent it from vibrating off its hinges, while I rolled around on the back seat next to my brother even more desperately trying to hold down that morning's breakfast. It was awful. However, on the rare occasions I plucked up the courage to lift my head above the line of the rear passenger door to briefly peer through the window, I did think to myself *it's really rather nice around here*.

So, 38 years later and having been with the LDWA for 5 years, I decided to start investigating some of the OS mapped trails in Hampshire to see if the countryside was as picturesque as I remembered as a child growing up and perhaps reminisce some of the 19 years I lived in the county, before moving out of my first tiny starter home in Basingstoke in 1990 to commence a new life in Kent.



David, in his beloved Hampshire

From late summer of 2019 to early spring of 2020, I embarked on a number of trails, taking me to nearly every corner of the county, including the following.

- A) The **Test Way**, a very pleasant 49 mile walk, starting near the river's mouth in Totten, just west of Southampton before winding its way north to finish at Inkpen Beacon, on the Hampshire Downs, south of Hungerford.
- B) The **Wayfarers Way**, based on an old market trading route, starting just east of Portsmouth at Emsworth also going north for 71 miles to finish and meet the Test Way at Inkpen Beacon. Clare Balding did a radio 4 ramble podcast on the Wayfarers Way not so long ago, as she described its route which goes past Her Majesty's horse gallops at Kingsclere and then along the top of Watership Down ... yes "that" Watership Down, upon which the film is based.

- C) The **Clarendon Way** a 27 mile path linking the cathedral cities of Winchester and Salisbury and worth, what is a super walk, just to see close up those two magnificent buildings. *And then on to*
- D) The 34 mile **Avon Valley Way**, linking Salisbury in Wiltshire before immediately nipping back into Hampshire to follow the river to Christchurch.

These longer routes were then broken up by a couple of day trips, which included the

- E) The 25 mile figure of eight **Oxdrove Way** a really peaceful and rural route criss-crossing many cattle trading routes in the area. *And the*
- F) The 21 mile **Staunton Way**, starting at the very popular Queen Elizabeth Country Park, just off the A3 at Petersfield. A valley route heading south towards Rowlands Castle, before returning via the opposite side. *And finally*
- G) The **Hangers Way**, which I completed more recently, and which links the Staunton Way northwards towards Alton. *{The word Hanger coming from the Old English word hangra, meaning steeply wooded slope, which is what many sections of the trail displayed.}*

Now it's possible that some of you may be wondering where on earth I managed to discover all these paths and their routes. Well, the answer is the LDWA website – and more specifically the **Long Distance Paths** section. Our very own Andy Clark was, until recently, responsible for the upkeep and accuracy of this element of our national website and both he and all his predecessors should be applauded for their outstanding work in this regard. I can tell you that I would happily pay my annual membership fee just for the use of this facility alone.

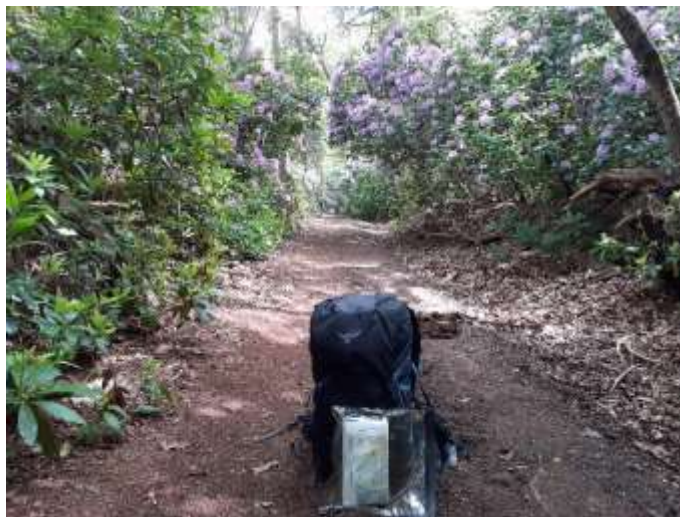
In fact you don't even need to navigate your way through the LDWA website; simply type into a search engine, for example "Test Way LDWA" and it will likely appear at the top of the list. When you open this page and scroll down you will see a section headed **Connected Paths**, where you will find amongst others the Clarendon Way and the Wayfarers Way and, as you click on those, so you will find more.

Whenever I have randomly picked an area of the UK to look at some potential routes to walk, I have found myself literally salivating, as all these paths have rapidly popped up in front of my eyes. And so, whilst investigating Hampshire, I inevitably came across the **Brenda Parker Way** ... then our foe from China hit our shores and that was that ...

In June 2021, I finally got around to planning and walking this four day 78 mile east to west route, which starts in Aldershot and finishes in Andover. Named after the founder member of the North Hampshire Ramblers group, it cuts through some of the county's finest areas of diverse countryside, from the lush green rolling grassland fields and wooded areas of east Hampshire to the more arable, undulating and wide ranging rural chalklands of the western side of the county. The contrast between these two sides of the same county, no doubt heavily influenced by the soil type, is quite stark. What attracted me to this route as much as anything was that on day two, it cut through the middle of Tadley, passing the front gates of my junior school and within a couple of hundred yards of the house in which I was brought up. That second day will live long in my memory and I have some great photos on which to look back. Funnily enough it also crossed one or two of those notorious roads my dad cruelly insisted on taking on his "country" route to Southampton.

My bed and breakfast in the remote village of Ashford Hill that second night overlooked a recreation ground on which I used to play football and cricket in my early teenage years, which I hadn't clocked when making the booking. The third day took me through the fabulous grounds of Highclere Castle, venue for the filming of Downton Abbey. I can't say I'm a huge fan of the drama, but Highclere Castle really was quite a site when I looked back from Pilot Hill, Hampshire's highest point. And to cap it all off, my best friend lives in Andover, so he and couple of others travelled the 16 miles to the lovely village of Hurstbourne Tarrant, on the Saturday evening for dinner and few drinks at the George and Dragon, which was a real bonus.

I then completed the route on the Sunday before catching the return train from Andover to West Malling, via London Victoria.



David's rucsac(s) make an appearance in the Hampshire countryside (above and below)

Now, because I had already taken up quite a few column inches going through rather a lot of preamble, I decided not to pursue my usual day to day account of this trail. However, I hope what you have read here has given you a very small taster and I'm going to leave you with these thoughts ...

Firstly, whoever devised this route to commemorate Brenda Parker did a mighty fine job, it really is outstanding.

Secondly, East Riding of Yorkshire, it's beautiful but very much understated Wolds and Way, which I have walked, is referred to as God's county. Vast swathes of Hampshire remind me very much of the Yorkshire Wolds, which is about as positive a steer as you would ever want. *David – there is a proposal to designate The Yorkshire Wolds as an AONB – are parts of Hampshire next in line?*

My third and final thought is this. I don't know if it's just my imagination, but it does seem to me that whenever we Kent walkers cast our minds west, once we've passed Sussex and Surrey, we seem to hop skip and jump through Hampshire, perhaps with the exception of the Isle of Wight, straight into Dorset and onwards. Can I suggest that next time you plan a walking holiday in that direction, shorten your journey, reduce some stress, save some fuel and pitch up in the middle of Hampshire.

I'm pretty certain that you'll be very pleasantly surprised.



PETER'S IRISH 4 PEAKS

PETER JULL

With Covid restrictions restricting overseas travel, where can I go? Northern Ireland is over the sea but not 'overseas' and Slieve Donard, the highest mountain, would complete the UK set. Having crossed the sea why not the highest in the Republic as well? Google revealed there's an Irish 4 peaks challenge, the highest mountains in each province of Ulster, Leinster, Munster and Connacht. Now we have a trip and return travel is already unrestricted, so as soon as UK to Ireland became test free, albeit later in the daylight season than preferred, bookings were made. So it was a mid-September Saturday that I found myself drinking Guinness in a thronged pub in Baltinglass (pop 2100) full (3-400 in the pub) of Irish watching Kent win the T20 final. To clarify, I was watching cricket on the TV, the Irish were just thronging anyway!

DAY 1

Drive around the Wicklow Mountains and up Glenmalur to the car park at the end. Walking starts up a forest track, past a hostel (closed) and into Fraughan Rock Glen. Becomes a path beside a waterfall / rapids. And then the fog and bogs begin. An Irish couple catch and pass. The fog soon blows away but the bogs stay. A faint path is discernible in the grass and the Irish couple, now far ahead, are a target until the fog blows back in. A solo walker emerges from the mist to my right and merges onto the path ahead. Just where the path fades away 2 Irish men catch up, one following a phone in hand. I follow them. The gradient eases and shelter from a chilly breeze is to be had in the lee of a cairn with others who had arrived from other directions.

Lugnaquilla is 3035ft high, but only 2600ft climbed from the valley, has taken 2½ hours so a longer route down is planned to fill the afternoon. Follow an easterly bearing, skirting some steeper ground, and a path becomes clear dropping below the fog line and then a little bit up to Cloghernagh (2600ft). Fork right (left was shorter past a lake) on a path descending steadily along and then

down the end of a spur. Other people are coming up, but the valley bottom stays determinedly far below. Path meets a farm track zig-zagging down to the road, faster and easier underfoot.



Even after a couple of miles along the valley road back to the car, there's still 2 hours before I need to leave. Go early and spend a couple of extra hours hanging around a hotel room but saving energy for later in the trip – or walk some more? A map board identifies a waymarked Miners Trail (lead has been mined locally on and off but no more), so move to the next car park down the valley and follow. A pleasant woodland path, managed but averaging 1:10, climbs up the other side of the valley. I make it above the treeline where it meets The Wicklow Way (an 81 mile Irish National Trail and one for another life), but not to the top of the valley, before turnaround time arrives, and back down the same way. Now it is time to drive to Limerick, halfway to the MacGillycuddy Reeks.

DAY 2

A grey dank morning does not encourage an early arrival, and a road closure diversion delays some more, before parking at Cronins Yard. All routes start along the same farm track but, before some stepping stones, I opt for the Brother O'Shay's Gully route. This soon becomes an expanse of grass and rocks where potential paths can be where someone has trod before or just a hidden puddle. Even from the far side of this I cannot see where the written description I have is intending I should go! Change of plan and return to the route others have gone. A mountain guide with group in tow comes the other way. Having said I couldn't find the route I cannot now follow his paying customers. Others are not far behind. Had that change of decision been 10 minutes later I could have tagged along but now it's back to cross those stepping stones.

Beyond, the path is clear, and clear where it is headed – a gully of grey rocks steeply up between the green. Some lesser streams have to be negotiated and, closing in on those grey rocks, there seems to be running water everywhere; this is not a path – this is a



waterfall(!), but others are spied further up The Devil's Ladder. An hour or more of picking a way up some substantial and lesser boulders and failing to stay dry by dodging the worst of the streaming water, a col is reached. The top of **Carrauntoohil** (3407ft) is shrouded in low cloud but it is grass and rocks, then rocks and grass in the up directions. Coming downers are using what seems to be an agreed stony path so I do likewise. The top is made obvious by a huge cross (*see photo*) re-erected by locals after an earlier one was vandalised. For a few minutes of my time at the top, the sun breaks through, enough for a mixed English/Irish party to make my photograph look like the weather was really nice. The all-around views failed to be unveiled beyond a glimpse or two.

Two mountains down, two to go if I can get down this one. I don't think I have the agility to step down some of those big steps up in the waterfall and opt for the zig-zag route which can be clearly seen when below the fog line. Up the other side of the col there is a well-worn path along a ridge, although it's a bit cliff-edgey in places. A small cairn marks the start of the descent which does what it says on the tin and zig-zags down the valley side. Towards the bottom the path become less distinct and is barely identifiable at the point where it meets the route I took up. The 2½ miles back to the car seems to take much longer than in the morning. Still too soon to leave for Limerick (halfway to County Mayo as well) but no thoughts of extra walking today, a nice Italian restaurant in nice and touristy Killarney nearby beckons.

DAY 3

Another morning of unpromising weather leads me to a layby next to a lake north of Leenaun. I can't see any path I'm supposed to follow, and didn't see where the intended path down meets the road. Opt for option B and drive round the other side of the Mweelrea range, where a long and winding road leads to Silver Strand beach and a car park. Back up the road I've just come down a bit, then up a track onto the 'commonage' as a sign calls it. Beyond a gate the bog begins. Directions say follow a stream on the right. Beyond that it's guesswork; a sort of col looks like it might be less steep. And then the fog begins. The col disappears but slog on up the bog. And then the rain begins. Find partial shelter in an eroded gully.



Silver Strand beach reappears below and some rocks above to steer away from. Slog on up some more. And then the fog and rain return. Find partial shelter behind a rock. Wait a while but this time nothing reappears – and prudence decides the only way is down. After the rain eases, what other way would you want to spend a holiday afternoon than wandering uncertainly through a soggy Irish bog, trying to keep to the right of anything that might turn into a stream further down? Back at the car, what to do with more spare hours? Walk across the big beach to the Atlantic. Walking back, the sun sweeps across the sand – and up on the mountain the fog turns from grey to white. Methinks that looks thin enough to find a way up but too late now; curses.

Resolving to stop at a promising looking site the many brown tourist signs point to, ends at a chip shop in what passes for a metropolis in this part of the world, Westport (pop 6200 but one way system traffic jams worthy of many more). Eating beside the river, the weather is warm and sunny; curses again. **Mweelrea** (2755ft) is the least frequented of the 4 peaks and with no paths to follow was the worst one to try on the foggiest day. Drive on halfway way to Slieve Donard.

DAY 4



A blue sky sunny morning drive crosses the border into Northern Ireland to reach Bloody Bridge and, bloody hell, there's an Irish mountain (**Slieve Donard**) without its head in a cloud. A National Trust gate and signs direct up a managed path with stream on the left. At a crossing point the route becomes less clear and more natural by staying on the right bank. Hands are required at some points, and when the path climbs above the stream a track on the other bank can be seen leading to an abandoned quarry. Perhaps I should have crossed the stream but many have clearly stayed this side. At the top of a col, the Mourne Wall is reached. Built to keep livestock away from Belfast's water reservoir, I see sheep on both sides! Following the wall, after 3 false summits, the real summit is reached after 3 hours. At 2790ft, stepping out of the shelter of the wall is 'blow you over' windy.

Down the other side, stones have been manoeuvred into steps. Which go on and on. Eventually the gradient eases to allow striding rather than stepping, even better where crazy paving has not been attempted. Having not come up this way, when the path ends, where to go is not clear. Follow someone into woods, where the exposed root systems are as hard to walk on as anything before. Eventually reach the park on the edge of Newcastle where most people start from. The map marked Mourne Coastal Path turns out to be the pavement of a busy road and then no pavement at all, not the most pleasant 2½ miles of walking back to the car. All energy sapped, drive on to Portrush.

DAY 5

Another grey drizzly morning delays plans until the worst of the weather forecast has blown through. Realising the next bus doesn't come into Portrush, drive along the coast to Portballintrae where at 9am I am the only passenger. Alight at the famous Carrick-A-Rede rope bridge. The National Trust have not yet re-opened it, so walking down to look is free. Unexpectedly that adds a mile and more to the walking distance and the bridge is not the greatest spectacle. Joining the Causeway Coast Path back at the car park, the National Trust have done their thing to avoid the risk of casual walkers getting their shoes muddy along the clifftop. A road is met and signs say down into Ballintoy Harbour, a Game of Thrones dramatic location in Series 6. Close up, the sea is being made dramatic by the windy weather.

The path continues betwixt cliff and crashing sea and starts to look like its vulnerable to higher tides. At a small headland, timing the waves feels prudent. Beyond is a hard sandy beach where horse and dog and man feet have left their mark since the tide was last in and there's plenty of retreating room so continue. 1½ miles later the beach ends in a mess of rocks and boulders. Half a dozen runners appear from behind and nimble across quickly. I pick my way carefully, doubting that a promoted path would come this way. But at the far side where there are a few houses, is a sign confirming it does, and warning of tide cut offs.

But also no sign where to go next, only a private Private sign. Follow the road up to the main road and hide from the rain in a bus shelter. Pressing on its not too far to the next road down where a couple advise that the Private sign is only supposed to mean cars, and if I'd ventured past I'd have spied a Coastal Path sign along the cliffs.



I now spy a worn path in a field below and a National Trust sign and gate to rejoin the Path. It soon climbs to the top of the cliffs where wet vegetation wets any parts of me not already wet. Up high, the drama of the roaring sea is less spectacular and although the view changes regularly it does get a bit samey. 'Am I nearly there' syndrome is well set in when round another headland I spy a path steeply down the cliff face to matchstick people below. **The Giant's Causeway** is slippery when wet and its hexagons not quite as regular in shape as expected. My attendance photographed, the leaving direction is past all the coach trippers plugged into their commentary headsets. The Path rejoins the clifftop, lower this side, and with Portballintrae often in sight, more progress is made. Dropping down to another wide sandy beach, footprints this time direct to a far end footbridge leading up to the low bluff where the car park is. There's enough time to walk on to Dunluce Castle and back but no energy or motivation. Exchange wet clothes for dry and leave for Belfast ferry port early.

So I've completed a 4 peaks challenge, the UK one, just not the Irish one. I've completed a 5 peaks challenge, the British Isles one, just not an Irish one. The Causeway Coastal Path Experience was probably enhanced by the weather, although I'd have settled for the wind without the wet.

SNIPPETS / DID YOU HEAR?

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

As with the two 2021 editions, this material has 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.

NEW PHASE OF INTERNATIONAL APPALACHIAN WALKING TRAIL LAUNCHED

DECEMBER 2021

A new phase of a walking trail which links Northern Ireland and the Republic with the world-famous Appalachian Mountains in the US has been launched in a bid to attract more international visitors. The International Appalachian Trail (IAT) Ulster-Ireland is part of an international walking trail that follows the Appalachian Mountain terrain, which existed on the super continent Pangaea before the Atlantic Ocean formed and broke up the continent. The Ulster-Ireland section totals 279 miles in length, was established in 2011, launched in 2013 and continues the trail after it leaves the North American continent; it starts at the Slieve League, passes through Glencolmcille, traverses the Bluestack Mountains in Co Donegal before crossing into Co Tyrone where it picks up the Ulster Way, taking in the Sperrins, the north coast and the Glens of Antrim.

So there's now a brand new challenge for.....

'NIMBLEWILL NOMAD,' 83, IS OLDEST TO HIKE APPALACHIAN TRAIL

NOVEMBER 2021

An 83-year-old retired eye doctor from Alabama started walking when he retired more than a quarter-century ago — and never stopped. M.J. “Sunny” Eberhart strode into the record books as the oldest hiker to complete the Appalachian Trail. Eberhart, known by the trail name Nimblewill Nomad, acknowledged that despite having tens of thousands of miles under his belt, the trail was tough going at his age, leading to quite a few spills on slippery rocks. He hiked the trail out of order, in sections, to take advantage of optimal weather, and had already completed northern sections including Maine’s Mount Katahdin.



The man with flowing locks and an impressive beard actually hiked farther than most who traverse the 2,193-mile (3,530-kilometer) trail that runs between Georgia's Springer Mountain and Maine's Katahdin. He started his hike in February at his home in Flagg Mountain, Alabama, adding hundreds of extra miles to the route. The journey represented a modest distance, relatively speaking, for a guy who trekked 4,400 miles (7,080 kilometers) from the Florida Keys to northern Quebec, an adventure he chronicled in a book, “Ten Million Steps.” He later hiked from Newfoundland to Florida, an even greater distance.

He also walked Chicago to California on Route 66. He completed his final section in the same year in which a 5-year-old became among the youngest to complete the feat; a 4-year-old, Juniper Netteburg, finished her journey with her missionary parents last year, and a 5-year-old, Harvey Sutton, from Lynchburg, Virginia, completed the trail with his parents in August.

WINNIE-THE-POOH – POOHSTICKS BRIDGE

OCTOBER 2021

To Winnie-the-Pooh fans, the bridge over the river on the edge of the forest where Pooh invents a new game is up there with heffalumps and pots of honey and the Hundred Acre Wood. However, the current bridge – *which the Andredsweald event passed over in 2021, as did at least one Kent Social Walk, and which the 2026 LDWA 100 is currently scheduled to cross* – is not the original one.

The original bridge was sold for £131,625 – its new owner is Lord De La Warr, who owns the 2,000-acre Buckhurst Park estate in East Sussex. De La Warr said that the bridge would “take pride of place on the estate close to its original position”. The structure has been described as “an iconic piece of literary history in physical form” by the Auctioneers. There had been interest from potential buyers in many countries, but “it’s a really happy ending and we couldn’t have hoped for anything better.”

The original wooden structure was built from oak in 1907 to carry pedestrians, horses and carts over a river in the Ashdown Forest, the setting for the Pooh stories and poems. It was replaced with a replica in 1999 after thousands of visitors keen to recreate the famous EH Shepard drawing of Christopher Robin leaning over the railings left it [worn and rickety](#). The original bridge was dismantled and placed in storage. It was later reconstructed and restored, and relocated to Kent after a private sale.



The original bridge, above, featured in AA Milne's Winnie the Pooh books and EH Shepard's illustrations. It was replaced in 1999 and restored

RUNNING CLUB MAKES HISTORY – BAGS ALL MUNROS IN A SINGLE DAY

AUGUST 2021

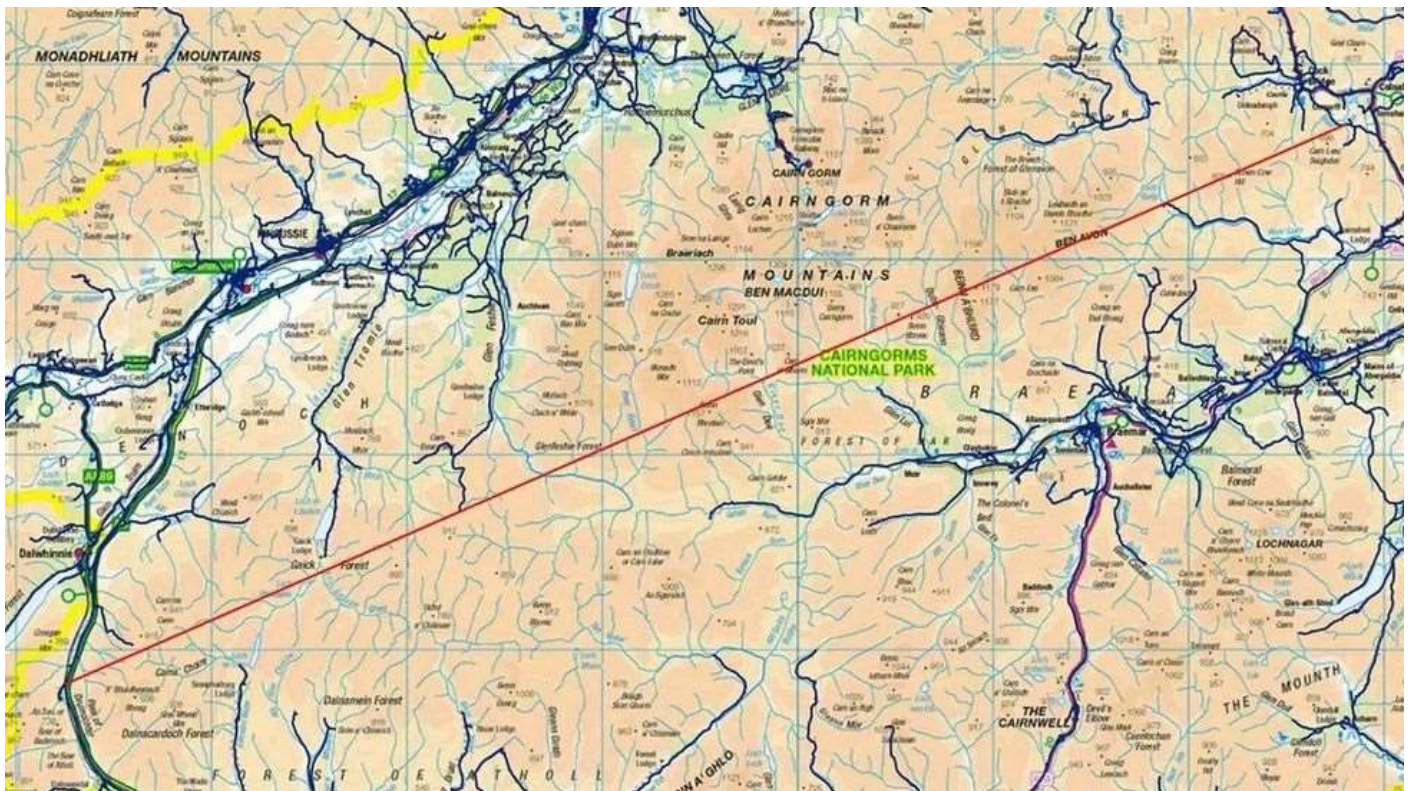
A Scottish running club has made history after its members managed to climb all 282 of the country's Munros in the space of a single day. It took around 120 members of Carnethy Hill Running Club to complete the challenge, which has never been done before despite several previous attempts. The members of the club, based in the Pentland Hills near Edinburgh, managed to reach every summit in the space of just 16 hours and 48 minutes on 14 August. After meticulously planning their assault on the mountains over Zoom, they bagged their first Munro, Beinn Dearg north of Bruar, at 7am. The final summit, Gairich north west of Fort William, was reached at 11.48pm with only minutes to spare.

As I am sure you are all well aware – Munros are mountains in Scotland measuring more than 3,000ft (914.4m), and conquering them all is a lifetime pursuit for many walking enthusiasts.

PAIR COMPLETE UK'S LONGEST STRAIGHT-LINE CHALLENGE

SEPTEMBER 2021

They become the first people to walk the longest straight line in the UK WITHOUT CROSSING A PAVED ROAD. Calum Maclean 32, and Jenny Graham 41, climbed mountains, scrambled down gullies and tackled steep rocky crags to complete the 49-mile (78.55km) challenge. There were no paths on the route through the Cairngorms, so they had to wade through thigh-high heather and pull themselves up steep slopes. They completed the walk from the Pass of Drumochter to Corgarff in 83 hours and 56 minutes (*although obviously significantly shorter than our 'blue riband' events, this makes the 100 look like a 'walk in the park'!*).



The pair carried their tents and all the food for the four-day adventure in 16kg (2st) packs. "I'm happy I've done it but I wouldn't do it again," Calum said. Jenny said that it was the hardest walk she had ever done. "I've walked all over Scotland and the Alps and this tops them all," she said. "We were very worried about our ankles in the deep heather because it covered holes you couldn't see. When we reached sections with flat slabs of rock we felt lighter and it felt great compared to the heather."



In the past, there have been a couple of failed attempts to complete the route, which was plotted by Ordnance Survey a couple of years ago. Calum said he was shocked when they reached the finish only to discover a road which was made of dirt and not concrete. "The Ordnance Survey route said it finished at the Old Military Road, but when we got there we could see it wasn't paved and was instead a dirt track. So we quickly got out our GPS device and Ordnance Survey app on our phones and plotted the route until it extended to a paved road - about 2km (1 mile) away. I had eaten all my food and was starving and tired, so it was tough to realise we hadn't reached the end. The last section was through a forest with lots of fallen trees which made it a bit risky."

The route involved going over lots of uneven ground through forests, as well as wading rivers and bogland. Jenny said: "Nobody has probably ever walked there. I was thinking at the time, this is truly our own original route, it was a cool moment. We have both climbed all the mountains in the Cairngorms and know the area well, but this walk took us to places we would never have visited. It was an incredible adventure that I wouldn't do again."

Jenny declared that she had learned that **the simplest idea – walking in a straight line – isn't always the simplest thing to do!**

We brought you the ‘walked around world’ story in the April 2021 Newsletter



A County Limerick retiree who made headlines for his walking feats during lockdown has now written a book on Irish pensions. Retired business consultant Vinod Bajaj, 71, said his self-published work *Pension Without Tension* is the first dedicated guide to the pension system in Ireland. “No better man to write about pensions than a pensioner,” said Mr Bajaj, who wrote the book in three months during lockdown. Mr Bajaj, who was born in India but has lived in Ireland for 44 years, is already known for his epic walking exploits around his home city of Limerick. In 2016, the married father-of-one set himself the goal of walking the equivalent distance of the circumference of the earth – 40,075 km – and said he completed the milestone last year amid the pandemic. He says his total walking distance is now up to 55,000 km in five years (*Cripes, the Editor makes that an average 6,875 miles a year, 18.8 a day*).

Editor comment – good luck with that one mate; in my humble opinion, it will undoubtedly be simpler for you to walk round the world again than to truly de-mystify pensions

One(s) for the future, maybe

BRITISH FOUR-YEAR-OLD – YOUNGEST TO REACH SUMMIT OF 11,000FT US MOUNTAIN NOVEMBER 2021



A British four-year-old has become the youngest person ever to reach the summit of an 11,000ft mountain, scaling steep precipices and surviving extreme weather conditions to get there. Jackson Houlding, age four, and his sister Freya, eight, spent two-weeks camping in the wilderness of Wyoming’s Rocky Mountains, led by father Leo, 41, an expert rock climber, and mother Jessica, 42, a GP and outdoors enthusiast. During the trip, Jackson became the youngest person to climb Pingora Peak – at a staggering 11,889ft – unaided, and Freya became the youngest to scale nearby Wolf’s Head, at 12,165ft. The Wind River Range where they spent two weeks summiting peaks can be treacherous, and is home to bears, bugs and freezing temperatures at night. The family rented llamas to help carry their gear.

NEW HOME – SLEEPS 12

NOVEMBER 2021

This precarious hut looks like it's tumbling down the side of the Forcella Marmarole pass in Italy's Dolomites, but fear not, it's safe. The hiking shelter, known as a bivouac, dangles at a hair-raising height of 8,750 feet (2,667m), ready to welcome the most hardy of hikers. Inside there's bunks to sleep 12 people, plus storage space, but – perhaps unsurprisingly – there's **no running water or toilet facilities**. The cosy shelter features layers of fibreglass to insulate visitors from the harsh elements outside. It was officially opened in August 2021.



New Bivouac Fanton, Dolomites, Italy