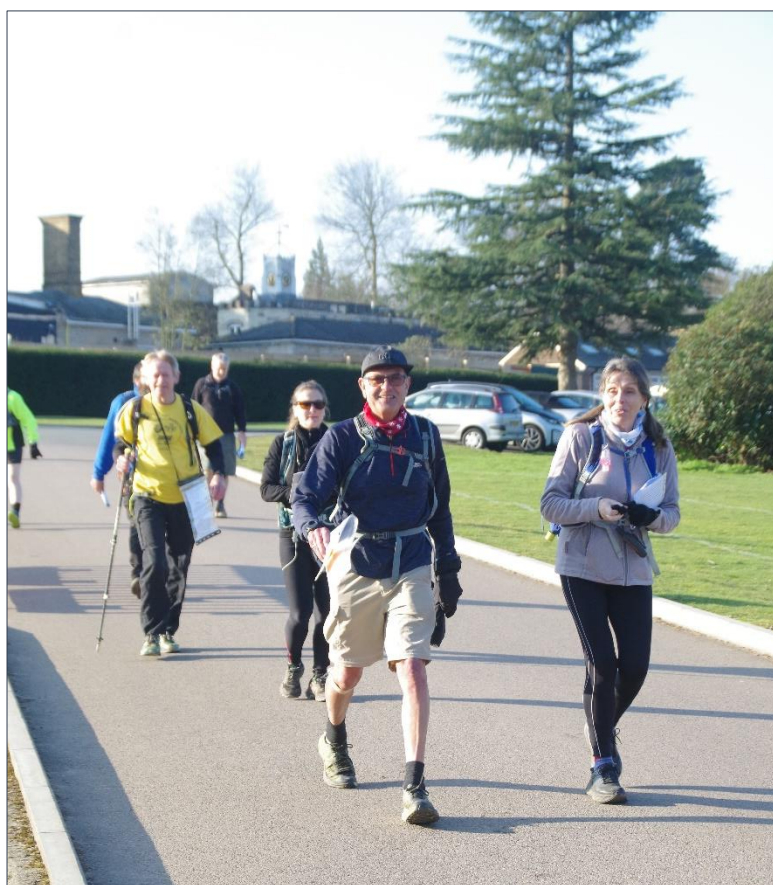


LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION — Kent Group

furthering the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking

NEWSLETTER



Early starters leaving the School grounds on the 32 mile Sevenoaks Circular



And the final loooong drag up that track

Number 117



April 2022

www.ldwa.org.uk/kent

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A WARM WELCOME to the slightly delayed April 2022 edition of the Kent Group Newsletter, and particularly to any new members – in 2022 alone there are already over 30 new Primary Kent Members, including Family Members (*ie two or more at the same address*). We hope to meet with all in due course.

Whilst the last few Newsletters have been full of the woes and restrictions associated with Covid-19, in its various forms, there is – thankfully – *apparently* now little to report on this topic, despite the fact that Covid may be with us 'forever'; essentially, there are now no onerous restrictions applying to Group / Social Walks or even to Challenge Events, although this situation could alter at any time. As mentioned before, Kent Group will always strive to abide by any future Covid-related rules and regulations. And if you are, or have been, affected by Covid, you have our sympathy, and we hope that you recover before too long.

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 (Covid or other) 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 COMMITTEE

CHAIR	STEPHANIE LE MEN	<i>kent@ldwa.org.uk</i>
SECRETARY	HELEN STRONG	<i>secretary.kent@ldwa.org.uk</i>
TREASURER	PETER JULL	<i>treasurer.kent@ldwa.org.uk</i>
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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>

'Monthly' Kent Group **Committee Meetings** have continued via Teams / Zoom. If you have any matters which you wish to raise, the next Committee Meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday 18th May**.

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

DATE	WHAT'S HAPPENING?	VENUE
Friday 3rd June	Trans-Pennine 100; Kent checkpoint	Hope (<i>Derbyshire</i>)
Sunday 19th June	50th Anniversary Day (+ Trans-Pennine 100 'post mortem')	Ryarsh Village Hall
Sunday 26th June	High Weald Walk – MARSHALS	Langton Green Village Hall
Saturday 9th July	High Weald Walk – EVENT (<i>note change of day and date</i>)	Langton Green Village Hall
End of July	'Copy' required for August Newsletter	n/a
Saturday 13th August	White Cliffs Challenge, 51 and 20 miles – MARSHALS	To be confirmed
Sunday 28th August	White Cliffs Challenge, 51 and 20 miles – EVENT	Deal / Betteshanger Sp & Soc
End of November	'Copy' required for December Newsletter	n/a
End Nov /Early Dec	Kent Group family Meal (<i>aka Xmas Meal</i>)	To be decided



LDWA 50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION (Kent participation)

As you will no doubt be aware, the (national) organisation is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. To mark this special year, all of the local groups are being encouraged to hold an event (or celebration), to be held over the weekend of 18th / 19th June. As mentioned previously, due to our two Summer Events being close at hand, the Kent Group Committee decided to keep matters relatively 'simple', and are arranging a "walking and social do", on **Sunday 19th June**.

The finer details are yet to be confirmed, but there will be an 8+ 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 the 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.**

And, as previously mentioned, this occasion will also double as 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.

Further details will be provided soon but, if anybody has any immediate questions, please contact David, Helen or Jim.

KENT GROUP CHALLENGE EVENTS

HIGH WEALD WALK – SATURDAY 9TH JULY 2022 (*please note date change, and now Saturday not Sunday*)

This event is **now open on SIE for entries** – the venue is the **Langton Green** Village Hall, on the western outskirts of Tunbridge Wells; car parking should not be a major issue. The Hall backs onto open land and footpaths, so urban walking should be minimal. All three routes, 27, 22 and 16 miles, will go via Penshurst, with the longer route passing near the Chiding Stone (which is, quite naturally, located in Chiddingstone). The routes are being finalised and should be proof-walked before the Marshals Walk (on Sunday 26th June). Start time will be at 08:30 for the 27 mile route, with a latest start of 10:00.

Part of the rationale for moving from Sunday to Saturday is that train services to Tunbridge Wells should be better on a Saturday. If you wish to enter this event, please do so; there are three main alternatives to use – a) by selecting the event from the SIE website list of events; b) by 'landing' directly onto the correct page using the link on the front page of the Kent Group website, and c) by using this link https://www.sientries.co.uk/event.php?event_id=9974.

We will, of course, need a crew of willing Marshals so, please, if not walking, do think about whether now is the time for you to try your hand at helping your fellow walkers. And, of course, you can combine the two by doing the Marshals Walk. The sub-committee for this event is Stephanie, Penny, Jim and Neil.

WHITE CLIFFS CHALLENGE – 51 MILES – SUNDAY 28TH AUGUST / MONDAY 29TH AUGUST 2022 (*Bank Holiday weekend*) also **incorporating a 20 mile event on Sunday 28th.**

These events will both commence from (and finish at!) the new Betteshanger Sports & Social Club, Cowdrey Square, in Deal. The long route follows the spectacular White Cliffs to, and then beyond, Dover, onto the North Downs Way, picturesque Elham Valley and rolling Kent countryside back to Deal. **The 51 mile route forms part of the KSS triple challenge series of 50 mile walks.**

The start time for the walkers on both routes is 10:00; 20 mile runners should get to the start line for 11:30, and 51 mile runners for 12:30. Entrants on the 51 mile route must finish by 08:00 (on the Monday).

Entries for this event, again via SIE, should open by 14th May – I am aware of a few eager beavers, already waiting to pounce. As with the High Weald Walk, but perhaps particularly so here, we do need a full complement of helpers, who are required to provide sufficient manpower to help cover all the checkpoints, as well as providing the Betteshanger HQ venue with cover during the quiet period (ie after the 20 mile walk entrants have finished, and before the bulk of the 51 milers start rolling in). If you can see your way to help, please do contact Peter Jull on walks.kent@ldwa.org.uk.

The sub-committee here is Peter, Nicola, Cathy and Penny

(2023) SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR – SUNDAY 19TH MARCH

No specific news as yet, but some details will appear in the August and December Newsletters.

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, which you should all be receiving.

Date	Name	Venue /Start	Distance	Start At	Leader
Sunday 15 th May	Invicta 92 Revisited Part 3	Linton	23 miles	09:00	Andy Clark
Sunday 22 nd May	Alliteration Q – The Quarter Walk	Tenterden	20½ ml	09:00	Peter Jull
Saturday 28 th May	Elham Valley Way	Hythe	23 miles	08:30	Nicola Foad/Cathy Waters
Sunday 12 th June	Saxon Shore Way	Gravesend	24 miles	09:00	Jim Briggs
Sunday 19 th June	LDWA 50 th – Kent Group celebration	Ryars	8+ miles	10:00	David Thornton
Sunday 26 th June	HIGH WEALD - MARSHALS	Langton Green	16,22,27	Contact Neil Higham	
Saturday 2 nd July	Benenden Bop	Benenden	23 miles	08:30	Neal & Jan O'Rourke
Saturday 9 th July	HIGH WEALD WALK – EVENT	Langton Green	16,22,27	To help – or enter via SIEntries	
Sunday 31 st July	Margate	Er, Margate?	18 miles	tbc	tbc
Sunday 7 th August	Art and Pizza Walk	Rainham	22 miles	09:00	Jim Briggs
Saturday 13 th August	WHITE CLIFFS – MARSHALS	tbc	20 or 51	Contact Peter Jull	
Sunday 21 st August	Cream Tea Walk	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
Sunday 28 th August	WHITE CLIFFS – EVENT	Deal	20 or 51	To help – or enter via SIEntries	
Sunday 4 th September	Invicta 92 Revisited Part 4	Lenham	20 miles	tbc	Andy Clark
Sunday 18 th September	High Weald Walking Festival	tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
Sunday 2 nd October	Camellia Orchards	Linton	18 miles	09:00	Peter Jull

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. We intend to have a presence at most upcoming Walking Festivals, The Elham Valley Walking Festival has an LDWA walk on **Saturday 28th May** (as shown above), the White Cliffs Walking Festival at the end of August incorporates our 51 and 20 mile White Cliffs Challenge, and there is September's High Weald Walking Festival, with a walk arranged for 18th September.

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.

WANTED – COULD THIS BE YOU?

ORGANISER REQUIRED FOR OUR ANNUAL FAMILY / XMAS MEAL AT THE END OF NOVEMBER / BEGINNING OF DECEMBER

This has been organised for the last good few years – 2020 excepted, for obvious reasons – by the 'first couple' of Kent walking, Jan and Neal O'Rourke. They now wish to step back from this role, but have indicated that they are certainly willing to assist in a hand-over this year

The role involves:-

- Sourcing an appropriate venue (*it could be somewhere we have been to before, or it could be somewhere new*)
- Agreeing a price with the venue (*3 courses?*) and ongoing liaison
- Agreeing the menu (*Turkey could be a staple item here!*), ensuring also that non-meat-eaters are accommodated
- Receiving cheques*, keeping an accurate note of who's ordered what and letting the venue know (**many will do a bank transfer*)
- Organise the seating plan
- Establishing a suitable, and reasonably gentle, 7+ mile walk for the morning – preferably starting and finishing at the chosen venue for the meal (*this is not a formal stipulation, but makes sense, and has been a fact for as far back as one can recall*)

Of course, the role could simply be split between one person arranging the meal and a second person planning the walk

Please indicate any willingness to help here by contacting either Jan and Neal, or Stephanie, our Chair. Thanks

Editor's Comments

Please keep those articles coming – the more articles and contributors the better. They are always needed for the next edition (and the one after that) – so, **please**, do pen something in good time for the end of July 2022 (for the August 2022 Newsletter) and end of November 2022 (for the December 2022 Newsletter). Articles can be in whatever style you wish, and even better if they are accompanied by pictures. As ever, thank you to those who have provided articles for this Newsletter.

Major contributions this time are from intrepid roving reporters, David and Graham, as well as an article from outside our normal shores. Also included are a few 'snippets' which I intend to continue with – unless there is a groundswell of opinion to omit these. Hopefully, and following the precedent set last year, for the August edition we will have 'The Trans-Pennine 100' as seen through the different views of perhaps **all** of our 22 entrants (*I'm not holding my breath, but will rejoice loudly if we get all 22 contributing – Ed*).

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, 9th May 2022

VANGUARD WAY ASSOCIATION



Many Kent Group members will have walked all, or certainly parts, of the 66-mile Vanguard Way from Croydon to Newhaven. For 40 years this outstanding trail has been managed informally by members of the Vanguards Rambling Club, but the time has now come to safeguard its future by setting up a formal association.

The inaugural meeting will take place at 14:30 on **Saturday 28th May** at St Matthew's Church in **Croydon**, and any LDWA members are welcome to attend. There will be a short morning walk with lunch stop; the meeting will be followed by a demonstration of a new Vanguard Way Photoguide app. For more details, and to confirm attendance, please email Colin Saunders colin@vanguardway.org.uk

NATIONAL WALKING MONTH - MAY

May is a busy month for Public Health campaigns, and I have just discovered that it marks **National Walking Month**. As they explain, there are so many reasons for us all to get up and out for some fresh air (and shown here as a 'refresher' for all).

Walking:-

- Supports a healthy immune system
- Boosts metabolism
- Lowers blood glucose
- Burns calories
- Strengthens joints, muscles and bones
- Improves mood and reduces stress-releasing endorphins
- Improves circulation
- Is free to do – so no recurring gym memberships* needed, or stringent exercise class times. You can do it on a budget at your own convenience (**the LDWA membership fee is minimal in comparison, and very good value for money indeed*)

As we in the LDWA readily recognise, walking is great exercise for both our minds and bodies, and it should be our 'mission', perhaps silent, for instance leading by example, to encourage others to take appropriate 'steps' (*sorry, bad pun!*) to walk further. I'm not saying that everyone should be aiming to walk 100 miles in one go

JANE DICKER – 10 Q & A

Although Jane lives in far-away Hastings, she is a *bona fide* Kent Group Primary Member. As you may have seen in the current (April 2022) *Strider*, page 12, it was Jane who very kindly donated the ten Hundreds Trig Trophy in memory of her late walking partner, Keith Baker. Jane, with an LDWA Member number of 2097 dating all the way back to 1977, admits that her long-distance walking days are now sadly well behind her, but she still remains reasonably active – and, until very recently, she could still be seen driving a bus around the Hastings area. She still hankers after climbing more hills and mountains, but only if her health permits it.

1. **How did you hear about the organisation?** Having joined the YHA, and through reading various walking magazines, joining the LDWA stemmed from there.
2. **Where was your first Challenge Event, and any other memories of this day?** I cannot be certain, but presume that my first Challenge Event would have been a Seven Sisters Marathon or the Rottingdean Windmills walk.
3. **What is your favourite social walk or challenge event distances, and why?** Probably 26.2 miles – although I felt that 100K was 'quite easy', in the sense that it is not 100 miles, and can be done with a reasonable bedtime finish.
4. **When walking a Hundred, what have been your highest and lowest moments?** The highest point undoubtedly is the finish – with the lowest point being the second day.
5. **What is the strangest sight you have seen on an LDWA walk?** This will be at night-time and observing people and their torches which seem to be wandering all over the hillside – and not being with any of them!
6. **What is your favourite walking area?** For me, the best walking area would have to be the French Alps.
7. **What would your perfect walk look like?** It would have to include hills – much more preferable than a flat walk.
8. **What do you think is the best thing about the LDWA?** The best thing about the LDWA is all of the helpers at checkpoints, normally extremely well organised and very 'professional'.
9. **Who did you walk LDWA Events with most often (if anybody)?** This was my partner Keith, who accompanied me on most walks.
10. **What is the best piece of walking advice that you have received?** Lots of people have given me advice, all very helpful – far too many instances for me to give just one.

And the focus on Jane leads us nicely into

TRIG TROPHY *(see also current Strider, page 12)*

Our secretary, Helen, writes:-

‘Since joining the LDWA in 2016, I feel fortunate to have met so many wonderful and inspiring people from all over the country. It was therefore my pleasure to be able to present the “honourable” Jim Catchpole with Kent Group’s Trig Trophy during the Essex and Herts Group’s weekend away, in October 2021, to the HF in Freshwater Bay on the Isle of Wight.

The Trig is awarded to Kent Group members who have completed ten LDWA hundreds, and this was Jim’s year! He completed his tenth in 42:10 with Jill (Green) – on their Virtual Hundred route undertaken on the island last summer.



Those who know Jim and Jill will appreciate how their busy walking schedule takes them all over the country. So, it was simply wonderful to celebrate his achievement in front of so many of his LDWA friends on his home turf.

Jim said he was looking forward to placing the Trig on the middle of the trophy shelf at home, and we hope that he enjoys looking after it for the foreseeable future.

As to when Jim will be asked to relinquish his well-earned award well, it would seem that the Trig Trophy may remain on Jim’s shelf for quite some time as, according to Kent Group’s Keith Warman’s *Encyclopaedia of Useless Information (17th Edition)*, possible candidates, or ‘next in line’, include **Malcolm Dyke** with **7 completions**, **Neal O’Rourke** and **Alan Stewart**, both with **6**, and **Nicola Foad** with **5**.

Well done again to Jim, we hope you enjoy looking after the trophy!’

As mentioned in the *Strider* article, there are now 33 names showing – let’s see if we can get that to 50 names by the time Kent’s 50th anniversary arrives in 2034. That should give all of **you** a full 12 years (*or 13 if doing this year’s 100*) to achieve this goal, so ample time – and no pressure!!!!

Jim (with Jill), holding tightly onto ‘his’ trophy, whilst attempting to cut cake

And mention of the 100 thus leads nicely into the next item

2022 – THE TRANS-PENNINE 100

As many will be aware, our Chair – Stephanie – and Secretary – Helen – ‘led from the front’ and showed us all how to do it, by completing the Marshals Walk this last Bank Holiday weekend. Stephanie finished her 13th 100 in a very impressive 34 hours (impressive, as she complained beforehand that she only had one good leg!) and Helen (her 2nd 100) in a very creditable 41 hours 44 minutes.

As previously mentioned, Kent Group will be staffing Checkpoint 9, at Hope Sports Club, some 56 miles into the event, at slightly revised timings, from 22:30 (Friday 3rd) to 11:59 (Saturday 4th); this is the checkpoint immediately before the Breakfast Stop. Sufficient volunteers have raised their hands so that we may well be operating in two shifts (with most being around during the busiest period) and all will be able to have a bit of ‘down’ time during the hours that we are open.

Of interest, perhaps – but *indicative*, only – on the Marshals Walk, the first arrival at Hope was at 02:13, from an 09:00 start the previous day, while the last (of 29 in total) did so at 11:02 (again having started at 09:00, so 26 hours into the event). Obviously, the weather could have a really important bearing on how fast entrants are moving, and there are a couple of long and exposed sections before they reach Hope. So entrants will no doubt be hoping for weather that is not too hot or cold, too wet or too windy.

The following 20 intrepid souls have put their hands up in the air, their money on the table and their feet in the grass; we trust that you all make it to the start line and **enjoy the walk** – and we very much look forward to seeing you all as you pass through Hope:-

Don Arthurs, Antony (Tony) Barter, Andrew Boulden, Martin Brice, John Cook, Malcolm Dyke, Andrew Gordon and Dawn Jones, Jill Green and Jim Catchpole, Peter Jull, Luke Leutner and Lucy Morgan, Don Newman, Judy Rickwood, Steve Russell, Dave Sheldrake, Penny Southern, Alan Stewart, Keith Warman

For Luke and Lucy, I believe that this will be their first attempt, whilst two others will be looking to break into the official 100 ‘rankings’ (ie seeking their first completion); at the other end of the scale, Andrew Boulden, Jill Green, Don Newman and Keith Warman have already racked up an incredible 118 completions between the four of them – what stars they are!

KENT GROUP ENTRANTS – no matter whether this is your first or thirty first attempt, the Kent Group Newsletter will always be pleased to hear the story of **your** 100, so please don’t be shy! Any length, any format (bullet points, prose etc) accepted, plus (if you have time to take them) any photos. Thanks

Members may have noted that the current *Strider* has details of a newly devised route around Manchester (see page 18), and the Trans-Pennine 100 and the Round Manchester Hiking Trail (and Pennine Way) will be indistinguishable on some footpaths around Black Hill and Dinting Vale – and the two will then cross paths later on, near Edale / Mam Tor.



Well, hot on the heels of one new route comes another one in the same general area, the Peak Way, which essentially also does what says, and travels 155 miles around the Peak District. This route has been devised by Ken Reece who planned the walk during the pandemic lockdown. Ken says that as the route starts and finishes in Stockport, it is very accessible from throughout the UK, which is not only a great benefit to hikers, but also helps in reducing the environmental impact on the Peak District which is a current issue. He has published a guide book '**Walking the Peak Way**' – currently only available through the website and online booksellers such as Amazon and Waterstones, but it will be sold in shops and other retail outlets later; the website is www.peakwaywalk.com.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Peak Way also intersects the Trans-Pennine 100 route, this time at Hayfield, Mam Tor, Hope (now, where else have we heard of that village!) and once more later on, and the two new walks will also converge and / or cross in at least two places. Like the Round Manchester route, the Peak Way has 'shorter' stages, of 13-15 miles. Whilst this is enough for most people, there is nothing to stop others (eg LDWA members!) completing two or more stages at a time.

SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR CHALLENGE EVENT

20 MARCH 2022

Organiser's Report

DAVID THORNTON

On Sunday 6th March a group of 11, including myself, took on the challenge of the marshals walk. Aside from the wonderful food offered by Helen Strong and Stephanie Lemen on the day, my overriding thought throughout was please, please, let the weather be as kind and as clear as it is today, on the 20th March. Not only for those people taking part, but for the marshals who would be tasked with running the outdoor checkpoints.

We were indeed treated to the most glorious weather on the day of the main event. West Heath School, which was once again our start location, looks pretty impressive at any time, but on this day the building and the grounds looked more picturesque than ever. I generally don't do challenge events, but I should imagine you would have to travel far and wide to come across an LDWA challenge event HQ with a more striking and tranquil setting.

Our entry limit of 225 was reached, of which 201 turned up on the day, which is a healthy percentage, no doubt influenced by the weather forecast. 101 took on the 32 mile event, 48 on the 22 mile and 51 on the shorter 17 mile circuit, with all completing their chosen route with just the one exception. Having three distances can make route planning and checkpoints a little more complex, but the fact we had very similar entries on both the 22 and 17 mile routes suggests that the shorter distance remains very popular, so the plan is to keep this for 2023. There is also a general feeling that the shorter route is a way to potentially introduce walkers to the LDWA. With all three distances being a mile or two longer than usual, a little more time was allowed for completion and this, along with the relatively dry and favourable conditions meant that no one missed any checkpoint cut off times.

Although very much common knowledge already, this was a brand new route for 2022, taking us as far north as Eynsford on the 32 mile route, with great views into London as you walk out of the back of West Kingsdown and then drop down into Eynsford. The route then headed back south along the Darent Valley, via the Shoreham Crown, a favourite viewing point of mine. Indeed, it was a route that needed good weather to do it justice.



At the risk of sounding a little repetitive, it is, as always, the goodwill of the marshals that enable these events to take place, giving up a huge chunk of their Sunday to help. The following, in no particular order, I would sincerely like to thank; Andy Clark, Neil Higham, Michael Headley, Stephanie Le Men, Judy Rickwood, Steve Russell, Sophie Butler (*who travelled all the way from Northampton to help*), Alan Stewart, Clare Evans, Nicola Foad, Peter Jull, Cathy Waters, Mike Attewell, John Gilbert, Neal O'Rourke, Jan O'Rourke, Dale Moorhouse, Martin Brice, Andrew Melling, David Sheldrake and Helen Strong.

I would like to pay particular thanks to Neal and Jan O'Rourke, who walked out and checked the first draft of the route description as far back as December 2020, to the members of the sub-committee, Andy Clark, Stephanie Le Men and Helen Strong for their help in pulling everything together, and to Neil Higham who, behind the scenes, worked tirelessly on our behalf liaising with Si Entries and dealing with the various queries posed by those who had (or hadn't yet) entered. A particular 'shout out' must go to Helen who planned, purchased, collected, stored, decanted and distributed food for four of the five checkpoints, and then to cap it all managed to scale up some wonderful hot food, something we've never previously achieved at West Heath School due to very limited kitchen facilities, for all 201 of our participants to enjoy ... and I dare say a good number of our marshals too who very happily hoovered up what little there was left over at the end!

West Heath School is booked for 19th March 2023, with a new route currently being planned.

(I should perhaps just point out that whilst the picture here of Helen suggests that there is all manner of kitchen facilities available, we are in fact only permitted to use the kitchen for washing duties and filling water barrels for the checkpoints)

Photos – there is a good selection of photos on the Kent Group website, some 60 from Eric Rolfe and 20 more from Jim Briggs, both of whom were on the 17 mile route – the photos included here are thus a mere selection



Sheila Briggs, about to depart (water containers hiding behind banner)



Knole House



Judy Rickwood, Alan Stewart and Sophie Butler waiting at Checkpoint 1 (Heaverham) for 201 to arrive – such an organised array of goodies!



Out and about on the 17 mile route



The long walk down to Eynsford, 32 mile route



Along the Darenth Valley, 32 mile route



Mike Attewell on number duty at Chipstead, the final checkpoint



Stephanie talking to an entrant at Chipstead; Editor looking busy (!?)

RECIPE

A good number of you commented favourably upon the Bean Casserole that Helen ‘cooked up’, and a few people even asked for (and received) the recipe; Helen has now kindly agreed that her magic ingredients can be more widely disseminated, so without further ado, here is the

SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR BEAN CASSEROLE RECIPE (2022)

Makes 8-10 small portions.

1 tbsp olive oil
 1 x red onion - diced
 1 tsp smoked paprika
 ½ tsp ground cumin
 ¼ tsp cayenne pepper (to taste)
 1 tsp sugar
 Salt and ground black pepper to taste
 400g tin/pack of tomato passata (*I used [Maggi Professional Rich and Rustic Tomato sauce](#) – Amazon*)
 400ml hot stock made with one vegetable stock cube
 250 g mixed frozen vegetables – I used **Tesco's**
 400g tin of chickpeas – drained
 400g tin of Taco beans in sauce – *I used Aldi's Four Seasons Mildly Spiced Taco Mixed Beans 395g*
 Handful of chopped fresh herbs – *I used Sainsbury's Middle Eastern Inspired Herb Mix, Inspired to Cook 40g – mint, coriander, parsley and oregano.*

Method:

Heat the oil in a heavy bottomed casserole
 Add the diced red onion and sweat down gently with the spices, sugar, salt and pepper.
 Add all the remaining ingredients and simmer gently for 15-20 minutes, or until the vegetables are soft.
 To finish, stir through some chopped mixed fresh herbs and check the seasoning.

POSTCARD FROM SCOTLAND: THE GREAT GLEN WAY

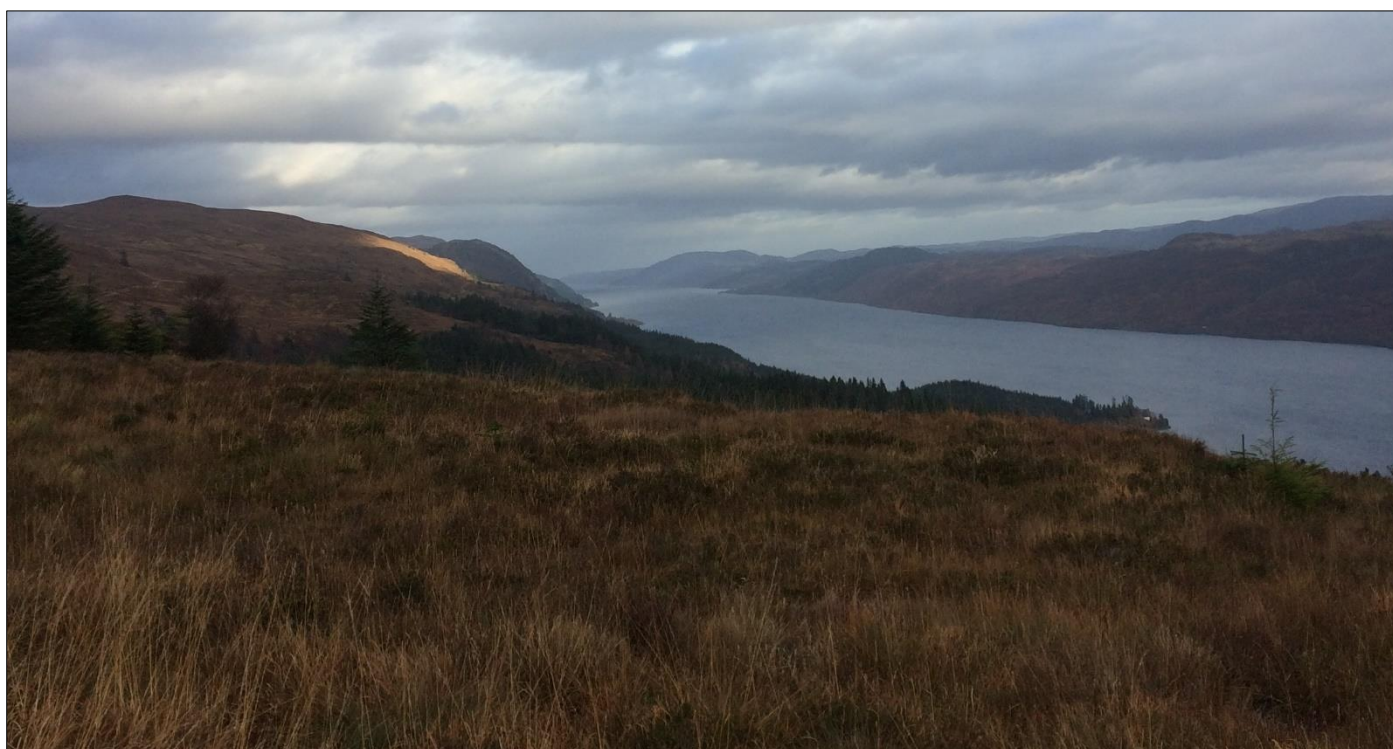
GRAHAM SMITH

Graham – the outgoing/former Strider Editor and, more pertinently here, former Kent Chair – and his wife moved from Deal to Tain a year ago. Graham has supplied a regular ‘postcard’ of his various Scottish hill walking adventures for many years now.

I WALKED the Great Glen Way (GGW) – one of Scotland’s Great Trails - over five days between November 15-19 (2021). I wouldn’t normally choose to embark on a long distance walk like that in late autumn, for the obvious reasons that the weather is not likely to be that good, and you are also having to contend with restricted hours of daylight. But 2021 was not an ordinary walking year for me.

As outlined in my last *Postcard From Scotland*, I badly sprained my Achilles tendon in the early part of the summer, which initially put just about all walking on hold, and I had to accept that I would have to wait a long time before I could attempt any LDWA-type walking. The physio here in Tain prescribed some stretching exercises for me, which I did 4-5 times a day, and I also put ice-cold peas on the Achilles twice a day, followed by the application of Deep Heat cream. Gradually, the Achilles improved, and I began to do walks of five or so miles, later increasing the mileage to double figures.

As with all LDWA members, walking is such an important part of my life. The weeks without doing serious walking were turning into months, and I was getting pretty frustrated. I was very keen to have one major walking adventure before the end of the year. So in early November, after I had finished work on the December Strider, and with my comfortable daily walking then 13-14 miles, I decided to take the plunge on the GGW, which is the nearest of the four Scottish Great Trails to me (the others are the West Highland Way and the Southern Upland Way – both of which I have done – and the Speyside Way, which I plan to walk this year). I booked overnight accommodation and investigated times of public transport to get me to Fort William. I was very excited.



Loch Ness from the high level route between Fort Augustus and Invermoriston

The GGW is 79 miles, and follows the Great Glen fault line from Fort William to Inverness. Many walkers do it immediately after the West Highland Way, which is 96 miles and ends at Fort William after starting at Milngavie (pronounced Mulguy), a few miles outside Glasgow. The GGW is a relatively easy long distance path, involving a fair bit of low-level walking, but there are also some fine high level sections in the second half.

Day 1 – November 15: Fort William-Gairloch, then Spean Bridge (13.5 miles)

I got the 06:59 train from Tain, then the 09:00 bus to Fort William. It was a nice sunny day, and I was walking at 11:20. The walking was flat, and involved 7.5 miles by the side of the Caledonian Canal, which was a little bit tedious at times, but the autumn browns and yellows on the trees and bushes were spectacular. The highlight was Neptune’s Staircase, a flight of eight locks at Banavie, 3.5 miles from Fort William.

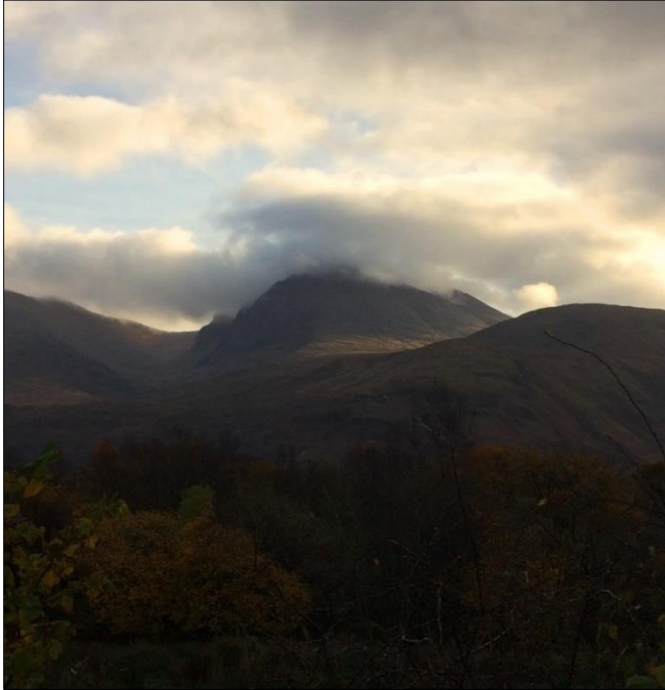
It was easy walking and the canalside made for good progress. The Achilles was playing up a little, so I made sure I stopped every hour to do some stretching exercises. And apart from a couple of light showers, the weather was fine.

At Gairloch, 10 miles from Fort William, I left the GGW and took the road to Spean Bridge, where I had booked into Inverour Guest House. The road bashing was 3.5 miles and I passed the famous Commando Memorial which overlooks the village and offers spectacular views across to Ben Nevis and a line of other mountains. The memorial commemorates the Commandos who played such a vital part in World War II and who trained in the area. Their training involved running - yes, running - up Ben Nevis.

Day 2 – November 16: Gairloch-Invergarry (15.5 miles)

This was a dreich (*a Scottish word which basically means wet and miserable*) day. It was a day that got wetter as it went on, but it's unrealistic not to expect some rain when doing a long distance path in November, so I knew I was going to get the wet stuff at some stage. Because of the Achilles, I arranged for one of the people who ran the B&B at Spean Bridge to give me a lift to Gairloch, thus avoiding a repeat of the 3.5 miles of road I had bashed along the previous afternoon.

I was walking just after 08:20. It was not then wet, but it was overcast, and the sky looked a bit ominous. The walking was pleasant at first, with a little more variety than the first day's walk. I soon reached Loch Lochy, and shortly passed a concrete platform at Bunarkaig, which was used to practice landing assault craft for the D-Day invasion of 1944.



Ben Nevis, shrouded in cloud, from the Caledonian Canal



Autumn colours seen from the Caledonian Canal

Before long the rain started. It was never heavy, but it was persistent, and the long walk up Loch Lochy did get a bit tedious in the wet. But it was easy walking on good tracks, making for rapid progress. I reached Laggan much earlier than I thought I would, and took the route option on the north side of Loch Oich (the other route goes south of the loch) to Invergarry, where I had booked at the Invergarry Hotel. By now the rain was heavier and I plodded on, along the long, steady, ascent above Loch Oich, but there were no views because of the rain and cloud. I arrived at the hotel at 14:20.

Day 3 - November 17: Invergarry-Invermoriston (15.5 miles)

This was the best day of the walk since leaving Fort William. I was off at 08:30, and initially there was some very nice woodland walking. The route then dropped down to the Caledonian Canal at Aberchalder, and there were 2-3 miles of pleasant canalside walking to Fort Augustus. Here there is a choice of route to Invermoriston – a high route and a low one alongside Loch Ness.



Loch Oich from the swing bridge at Aberchalder



River Garry at Invergarry on a dreich afternoon

Although it was a little overcast, there was no rain, so I opted to take the high route (well, I do have my reputation to consider!) and very nice it was too. There was a long steep climb passing some waterfalls, finally emerging on the open hillside, with lovely views down to Loch Ness. It was great to walk over the hillside and to have sweeping open views, at one stage reaching the route's high point of 1385 ft. The path, as you would expect on one of Scotland's Great Trails, has been very well maintained, and was such a pleasure to walk on. It was then quite a steep descent, on a zig-zag path, to Invermoriston, where I stayed at the very nice Craik-na-Dav B&B, which is run by two sisters.

Day 4 – November 18: Invermoriston-Drumnadrochit (14.5 miles)



This was the best day of the walk, and was largely a glorious high level march across the hillside. I left my B&B just before 09:00, then had a climb through the trees to a magnificent track which continued across the hillside, with a couple of dips to cross burns. It was a bit cloudy at first, but it didn't take too long for the cloud to burn off, and there was even some blue sky and a bit of sun. I was stopping regularly to stretch my Achilles, and the going was fabulous. There were a couple of short, fairly steep climbs, but there were always fine views to Loch Ness and the hills and lochs beyond.

After passing the Viewcatcher sculpture, crafted from bent sticks (where, like just about everyone else, I took a photograph), there was a descent to a lovely grassy viewpoint, followed by a delightful path of close-cropped grass, which gradually descended, eventually reaching a quite rural area. Here the quality of the walk deteriorated, as there was then a long, tedious tramp along the road, through countryside which was quite uninspiring. Still, all walks have their less inspiring sections, and I just plodded on, finally to turn off on the path which led to Drumnadrochit. By then there was light rain, and I was really glad to reach the very nice Loch Ness Inn at about 14:30.

The Viewcatcher sculpture between Invermoriston and Drumnadrochit

Day 5 – November 19: Drumnadrochit-Inverness (20 miles)

This was another great high level march – my first 20 miler since the Achilles problem started, and I don't mind admitting that I was quite cream crackered in the last three miles of so into Inverness.



Walking beside the A82 from Drumnadrochit was followed by nice paths into the trees, going near Temple Pier, where an information board recounts how, in 1952, John Cobb attempted to break the world water speed record on Loch Ness on his jet-propelled Crusader boat. Although he became the first person to pass 200mph on water, it ended in tragedy as Crusader flipped at high speed, the craft broke apart and John died. Sadly, the world record attempt did not count because he did not complete the necessary distance.

Having read this sad story, I then had a steep climb through a plantation to Abriachan Forest, reaching 1,230ft, the high point of the day's walk, with fine views over to Loch Ness and beyond. Then there were good tracks through an open area leading to Abriachan Community Woodland. I went to the Abriachan Eco Cafe and Campsite and bought a cold drink from the lovely, larger-than-life, woman who runs it. After that there was a good path to the road, which I followed for a couple of miles to the start of a very nice track which went all the way to Dunain Hill which overlooks Inverness, before descending to the outskirts of the city.

Urquhart Castle, near Drumnadrochit

The route through Inverness was delightful, walking alongside part of the Caledonian Canal again and then by the River Ness before reaching the end of the trail at Inverness Castle. By then it was starting to get dark, with the city's lights coming on, which made it very pleasant. Walking through Inverness really is a grand way to finish one of Scotland's Great Trails.



View towards the mountains from the road near Abriachan

The GGW is indeed a great walk, and I am very glad I have completed it. The last two days were fabulous high level marches, and I was very lucky with the weather. I used the Great Glen Way Guide published by Trailblazer and written by Jim Manthorpe. The maps gave all the details I could wish for, as well as information about where to stay, places of interest and transport.

I have to say I don't feel the Great Glen Way is as spectacular a walk, in terms of scenery and sheer variety of landscape, as the West Highland Way and the Southern Upland Way. That's no criticism, and I know other people may well have different views. But it is highly recommended, and combining it with the 96 mile West Highland Way into a 175 mile trek, linking the great cities of Glasgow and Inverness, would appeal to many walkers.

The GGW is very well waymarked, and by Scottish standards, the route doesn't have any climbs which are too steep – indeed, generally it's a relatively flat walk. So – some time – it would probably lend itself quite well to a one-off LDWA summer challenge, at a time when daylight hours are at their maximum, starting early in the morning at Inverness to get what hills there are out of the way while it's still light, and finishing on those flat miles alongside the Caledonian Canal to Fort William. Well, I am Secretary of LDWA's North of Scotland Group now, so watch this space ...

*This is all well and good, Graham, but the all important question is – **where was Nessie??????***

THE PENNINE WAY 1st – 14th OCTOBER 2021

DAVID THORNTON

It would be fair to say that my preparations for this trail, widely regarded as being one of, if not the most challenging of all the 19 National Trails, didn't go quite as smoothly as I would have liked. My mileage throughout the spring and summer had been really high for me and things were tickety-boo until I picked up a bit of inflammation in my Achilles tendon six weeks before setting off. Nothing serious, but sufficiently concerning to make me stop all walking leading up to my departure, for fear that it would aggravate it, causing me to pull out completely. As it turns out my little old Achilles tendon didn't even get a sniff on the pain front, for reasons I am about to reveal.

Being the third attempt to plan this trail, I had tweaked the travel arrangements each time, finally settling on driving to Sheffield at 04:00 on the 1st October to catch an early 09:47 train to Edale. The idea behind this was to trim the amount of days holiday I would need to complete the route by one. I certainly won't be considering doing that again, but you attempt these silly kind of things when you work full time and holidays are such a valuable commodity. So having hopped on my desired train at Sheffield, packed full of what primarily seemed to be walkers, getting off at various stations on-route, I arrived in Edale at 10:30, strolled up to the start, passing a couple of places I wish I'd stayed at the night before, took some pictures of the plaque informing me that I had a sobering 268 miles to complete and off I set.

It began raining as soon as I started walking, but I knew it was passing through in an hour or so, to leave me with a dry day and some good photo opportunities at the top of my first climb, Jacob's Ladder. And indeed, as I looked up to the sky about 45 minutes into my walk, I could see that things were starting to clear and instinctively placed my hand on my belt pouch to touch my phone, with which I'd be taking said photos.

To my dismay and rapidly developing panic, the phone wasn't there. Having left behind too many essential items over the years, I have conditioned myself to a thorough recce of all locations where I have stopped for any reasonable time before moving on – but not this time. With language somewhat bluer than the developing sky, I tabbed back to the start, to reclaim with some relief my phone, which was perched on the wall and tabbed back again, now nearly 2 hours behind schedule and chasing the daylight.

Now, instead of stopping to think clearly, consider time and distance and terrain smartly, I shot up Jacob's Ladder like some idiotic goat herder and continued at the same relentless pace past Kinder Downfall and onwards for a total of around 16 miles, which finished with a steep and very demanding drop towards Torside Reservoir, before marching the two extra miles into Hadfield to stay at the White House Farm B&B. So, what should have been a relatively easy and sedate 16 mile stroll on my first day rapidly turned into a 22 mile slog. I remember chatting with my daughter, Rebecca, that night, and muttering the words "I

think I've really messed up here", the realisation of which became very real when I woke in the middle of the night wracked by severe pain in my left knee. An MRI scan diagnosed this as trauma of the knee shortly after I returned to Kent – and it certainly traumatised me for the next 13 days of my trail.



Top of Jacob's Ladder

I had 23 miles to do on day 2, to reach The Moorcock Inn on the outskirts of Littleborough. It would have been 25, had Sheila, the owner of the White House B&B not dropped me off at the path immediately after breakfast. For the very first time in my walking life, I lent on the assistance of a pole, which I ordered only a week before I set off and which I still hadn't decided to pack until the night before I left Kent. This decision was on the advice of a member of our Kent Group. That person knows who they are, and I cannot begin to thank them enough, because without it there is absolutely no way I would have completed the route. That pole became my very best friend, in a "Wilson" kind of way from the film *Castaway*. Whilst I wasn't going mad to the point where I would have any intimate conversations with my newfound walking partner, I did quietly acknowledge him for getting me through at the end of each day.

Being a Saturday, The Moorcock Inn had a live band, which happened to be located directly under my room, although it was with some relief that they advised they would be packing up at 21:00. What they failed to divulge was that this would be followed by a disco until 23:00! This, along with being woken up in the middle of the night with more severe knee pain, meant a very poor night of sleep was had. From that night onwards I can't think of one where I wasn't woken up by similar pain.

The 07:00 start on the Sunday kind of set the tone for the rest of my trail, with the realisation that very long days and an even more sedate pace was the only way I was going to get through each day. Setting off just before first light became embedded in my routine. This day took me past the fantastic Stoodley Pike Monument, then rapidly down and even more steeply up and out of Hebden Bridge, before taking me past the Bronte ruins. It had started raining heavily at this point and I was feeling pretty dejected with knee pain, but I was strangely comforted by the thought that surely nothing could be so dismal and dejecting as being a member of the Bronte clan, living up here in this kind of weather, so I trundled on and stayed in a very comfortable Airbnb in Cowling.

Thankfully, in terms of terrain and distance, day four was a relatively straight forward 18 mile stretch into Malham and its Cove, where I had never previously visited and which I was looking forward to seeing. In my opinion the best shot of this attraction was clearly a few hundred yards before you get to the village, so I took good advantage of this, before arriving and settling down at a comfortable self-contained Airbnb. That night, as with every night, I focused with obvious interest – and, on this occasion, with increasing alarm – at the weather forecast. You know you're in for a torrid day, when Tomasz Schafernaker points at an enormous dark blue northerly swirling splodge over the heart of the Yorkshire Dales between Malham and Ribbleshead, worryingly broken up by regular bright yellow blobs, all starting at precisely 07:00.



Stoodley Pike ahead



View of Pen-y-Ghent

By the time I'd battled up what seemed like an endless supply of stone steps to the top of Malham Cove the following morning, it was lashing down. So, picture the scene as I embarked on my attempt to cross the top of the cove, all toggled up, in driving rain, a backpack, a pole and a left leg about as sturdy as a pipe cleaner, slipping around the limestone top, broken up by a maze of deep and rather menacing crevasses. It's no wonder after about only 30 yards I did a U-turn and gingerly staggered back, thankful for returning in one piece.

I eventually found a slightly easier route around the back, before heading off directly into the driving rain, past Malham Tarn, over Fountains Fell, towards the base of Pen-y-Ghent, one of the Yorkshire Three Peaks. I say the base, because by the time I got near, the top was well shrouded in swirling cloud and rain and it became clear to me that any attempt at going up, on my own, in that weather, feeling somewhat wet already, would have been foolhardy.

Having decided I could return another time to attempt the Three Peaks Challenge one day, I took a low route before finally arriving, completely sodden, at the Station Inn at Ribbleshead. What a wonderful location this is, with super friendly staff and a fabulous menu, plus what must rank as being the best packed lunch for the following day with which I have ever been presented.

Whilst things didn't get any worse, they certainly didn't improve, but I promise this is the last time I am going to mention the knee until the last day. As I left the Station Inn at first dawn, the pain, as I trundled down the road to pick up the PW trail again, was excruciating. I remember stopping about half a mile out feeling very low indeed, to turn around and see the first morning train make its way across the Ribbleshead viaduct and thinking to myself *Come on mate this is ridiculous. You should be on that train heading home. You're five days and 100 miles in with 9 days and 168 to go!!* Instead, I took a deep breath, turned back round and continued on my way ... and what a day it turned out to be.

As often happens when a severe northerly weather front passes through, as had happened the day before, it removes just about every particle of contamination from the sky, leaving you with the most crystal clear day. The kind of day, which is so clear, it gives you the illusion that no matter how far you walk, nothing behind you feels like it's getting any further away. Apart from the very last day, this 24 mile section between Ribbleshead, passing Hawes, up and over Great Shunner Fell and down into Keld to stay at the very comfortable Greenland B&B, was the best on the trail and just what I needed to keep me motivated.



The iconic Ribbleshead Viaduct



The drop into Hawes



Great Shunner Fell



Cauldron Snout

As clear as day 6 had been, day 7 was shrouded in thick fog, as I left Keld to pass over Stonesdale Moor, passing the Tan Hill Inn, over Sleightholme Moor and down into Bowes for a shorter and very welcome 16 miles. Here I stayed at the Ancient Unicorn Inn, with very well appointed rooms. Having arrived here at 15:00, I took full advantage of the room's sofa, putting my feet up, drinking lots of tea and reading my book, but not before going through my daily stretching regime. I used this stop to do my usual map swapping ritual, having posted half of the maps to the Ancient Unicorn and posting the used ones back home. Given the fact that the PW is pretty well sign posted, the full OS Explorer maps might seem a bit of a luxury, adding unnecessary weight to the bag, but I've always carried these and there have always been odd occasions when I have been very grateful to have them at my disposal, as would be proven the following morning.

Having left, as usual, in that period that separates the night and the first light of the morning, I stopped about an hour or so in to have some breakfast. Once fed, I trundled off again and immediately fell into one of those periods of dangerous reverie, where your mind wanders thoughtfully through life, your future plans, goals, etc and the path just seems to float past you unnoticed. It's dangerous, because you lose focus on the trail and, almost inevitably, I lost track of where I was and somehow managed to leave the PW. What was more concerning is that when I reached round my bag to grab my map from its chosen home, wedged between the top section and main body of the pack, it wasn't there.

Now I don't know if it's just me, but when you attempt to cast your mind back to where any lost item could be, which in this case was most likely where I stopped to eat, no matter how far you might think that might be, you can always bank on at least doubling it. It seemed to take a demoralising eternity to make my way back and, as it happens, the map had fallen out of its location just a couple of hundred yards from where I stopped. Very irritating! This 22 mile day (which became 25) took me over Cotherstone Moor, then down into Middleton-in-Teesdale, before heading up the Tees River towards my next overnight stop, the Langdon Beck Hotel.

The very words, Langdon Beck Hotel, always cause me to cast my mind back to an amusing story Graham Smith once recited, which followed an overnight stay he took a few years back. It would be fair to say that Graham wasn't overly impressed by his experience here and it would also seem that one or two entries Graham clocked in the visitors' book suggested others felt the same. "Langdon Wreck" was apparently one comment, shortly followed by another scribbled across the page stating, "Never again". Now, it would be fair to say that the Langdon Beck Hotel is a little on the tired side, seemingly devoid of any significant investment for some time. If you're a walker, looking for somewhere overnight which is warm and quiet, with decent food and friendly staff, quite frankly it's very adequate. However, if you and your partner are looking for, shall I say, a romantic weekend away in the middle of nowhere, but with rather more luxurious surroundings, can I suggest this location may not tick enough boxes.

I left Langdon Beck after a jolly good breakfast, to take a couple more miles along the river Tees before reaching the waterfall and climb at Cauldron Snout just prior to Cow Green Reservoir. My itinerary for this day was emblazoned with the words High Cup Nick, which was to be one of the highlights of my fortnight of walking. Unfortunately, when I got to the top and knocked on the door, it seemed that Nick didn't want to come out and play on this Saturday – and instead hid in a veil of very irritating and very thick fog. So instead of having the thrill of spending an hour or two here just milking in one of the most wonderful sights of our beautiful British landscape, I simply trundled back down the other side to complete my 15 mile day into Dufton Green for my overnight stay at Brow Farm B&B.

Sunday 10th October was day 10 of my 14 day hike and probably for the first time I allowed myself the slightest excitable feeling that I could genuinely complete the route. However, there was the small matter of 22 miles today and the highest point of the PW over Cross Fell. Now, I'm not going to dwell on Cross Fell too much, apart from the fact that the cloud did very kindly break just as I reached the top, but what I will say is this ... Having walked up to this high point in very blustery but dry conditions and then down the other side passing the infamous Greg's Hut towards Garrigill, I want to pay tribute to anyone who managed to navigate their way over this obstacle in the opposite direction and eventually complete the LDWA's Hadrian Hvdred event in 2019, in what must be considered some of the most hideous weather conditions. They all have my utmost admiration. My stay that night was in the lovely small town of Alston and the most perfect Airbnb I could possibly wish for after such a long day.

Sorting out mileage and accommodation for Monday 11th was quite tricky, with obvious locations either a little short of desired distance or a little on the long and challenging side. Inevitably, I chose the latter, which turned out to be 23 miles, the last 6 of which were along the Hadrian's Wall path. I walked the HW path back in February 2018 and it was great to re-visit some of the super landmarks, nearly all of which I remembered. But what I did slightly forget was how challenging this particular middle section was, with so many steps, causing the pace to slow significantly. I eventually reached, rather fatigued, a place called Hole Gap at 18:30 and after 12 hours of walking, where I called upon the services of a local Taxi firm to take me into Haltwhistle for my overnight stay. I didn't realise that Haltwhistle is unofficially, possibly even officially, labelled as being the most central town in the UK? Seems unlikely given its northerly location, but I suppose if you draw a line from the most northern tip of Scotland then it's quite feasibly correct. It was my birthday today, and – like High Cup Nick – this was also emblazoned across my itinerary. Unlike High Cup Nick, however, I got to choose whether or not I wanted to play and indeed I chose to, with a bottle of bolly and a jolly nice portion of fish and chips, followed by a very heavy birthday sleep!



Thinking back, the next two days kind of passed me by really, as I trundled my way through the enormous Kielder Forest and Northumberland National Park, for overnight stops first at the very comfortable Brown Rigg Guest Rooms at Bellingham and then a continuation of undulating forestry towards my last stop, the Forest View Walkers Inn at Byrness.

What a quirky but wonderful place the Forest View Walkers Inn is by the way; blink and you'd miss it on the little housing estate, but my advice would be to hunt it down and stay here. The hosts, Oliver and Laura are really friendly, and Oliver is particularly knowledgeable when it comes to matters of a walking nature.

Cheviot Hills

I say these two days passed me by, mainly because so much of the walk was hard gravel track and shrouded in managed woodland and subsequently offering little in the way of scenery, and secondly because I was focused on getting to my last and longest day, which was to be a 28 mile trek across the Cheviot Hills. I had considered breaking this section in two, by way of some handsomely priced taxis, but when I bounced that idea off our former Chair, Mr Smith, his inevitably ultra-positive response was "Naaahhh, Dave, 28 miles will be no problem. After 13 days of walking you'll be super fit by then".



Now I do believe I said I wouldn't mention my knee again until the last day, so let me reassure you that it was as painful entering day 14, as it had been throughout. So, whilst I would wholeheartedly agree to the adjective "super" I'm not entirely sure that the follow up word "fit" was the term I was seeking to describe how I felt as I hobbled into Byrness. Although perhaps, if I may be so bold as to say, the word that I was really searching for did indeed begin with the same consonant!!

Knowing I would be setting off at least an hour before any daylight on the last day, I took some time to do a recce the afternoon before to get some really clear bearings, seek out any fingerposts and waymarks and commit these and the first couple of miles of the route map to memory.

End of Cheviot Hills

This proved invaluable, as I left at 05:45 on Thursday 14th, in pitch darkness, torch in hand, to eventually be faced with a very steep and very long climb to reach the main top ridge and turn north across the Cheviot Hills. As the first daylight gradually seeped through, what I was left with was what I can honestly describe as being the most exhilarating and breath-taking day of walking I have ever done.

What a day! What a day!

I strode into Kirk Yetholm at 18:30, with an overwhelming sense of achievement and I'm not too shy to say feeling really quite emotional. After the customary photo shoot outside the Border Hotel, I trundled off to stay at the very comfortable Plough Inn and, after a good night's sleep, set about returning home via taxi to Berwick, train to Sheffield and a long Friday afternoon drive to Kent.



The 'Finish' Line, at last; well done David!

The Pennine Way was the ambition of the former Ramblers Secretary Tom Stephenson, who took on the owners of the private shooting moors, in order to develop this route through northern England. The final section of the trail heading into Kirk Yetholm was finally completed in 1965 having first been tested by the British army, who completed it in one day via a series of relays. Anyone who has the pleasure of being able to walk this amazing route owes a huge debt of gratitude to Mr Stephenson. It's certainly a massive "thank you" from me!

THE CAPITAL RING

DEE BROCKWAY (BBN GROUP)

Fancy a few days walking in January or February when, but for the real tough guys, mountains are not at their most appealing? For all those nodding, please read on.

Canal towpaths are always a good option. Flat, relatively low level, not exposed and bursting with our country's history and heritage. Having previously enjoyed walking The Grand Union Canal, Lea Valley Walk and the Kennet & Avon Canal with good friends Jill Green and Jim Catchpole, it was decided my husband Phil would join us to make a foursome and we'd be a little bit different this year.

The Capital Ring is an excellent, way marked 78 mile circular walk around London; always between 5 and 10 miles from the city centre. 'The Capital Ring' book by Colin Saunders (*a recognised author, Vanguard Way founder, 2012 100 Route Editor and LDWA London Group member, amongst various other accolades*) is an essential investment. Public transport options are given for starting / finishing the walk at all 15 sections. Route marked 1:16,666 enlarged Explorer maps cover the full 78 miles, together with a wealth of information about special features of interest. If you fancy learning even more interesting, historical, facts about what you see, it may be a good idea to get Jim to tag along...as always, he was our walking history book.

On our previous winter wanders we had walked 'point to point' carrying all our requirements between our pre booked overnight stays. The beauty of The Capital was we had the option to 'walk light'. Kings Cross Travelodge lived up to expectations as a well centrally situated, good value place to stay and your second suggested purchase is a London Transport Oyster card.

We decided to complete in 5 days, hoping to average about 16 miles a day, although our GPS credited us an average extra 2 daily miles. Meeting at 07:15 allowed for a hearty Wetherspoons breakfast, then travel, and ensured we were walking by 09:00 each day. Our schedule included coffee and lunch stops where our choice was, of course, vast and varied. Garden centres, park cafes, pubs, garage workers burger bars and the customary packed lunch eaten overlooking the city skyline from different angles.

The places we visited and the people we met and talked to were varied, diverse and too numerous for all to be included here.

A select few (these are my chosen 4 locations).

- Richmond Deer Park, which included King Henry's Mound. The small climb is rewarded by a view of St Paul's Cathedral, some 10 miles away. A good free telescope reveals the cathedral, appearing to stand alone, through a special gap in holly hedging and a maintained clear avenue in Sidmouth Wood. It is one of London's 13 protected vistas.
- Abney Park cemetery in Stoke Newington, containing 300,000 graves. Most, like Salvation Army founder William Booth, are 'friends of' or religious dissenters and the ground remains un-consecrated. It is an official nature reserve and, whilst controlled, feels quite eerie and abandoned.
- Harrow School, founded in 1572, whose former pupils include Winston Churchill and Lord Byron. We walked past many of its impressive buildings and across the vast playing fields, encountering possible sporting stars of the future.
- Fryent Country Park. This was only one of several interesting London parks *en route* which were previously unknown to me. We stopped for a few moments' quiet contemplation at the pond on Barns Hill. Here is a memorial bench to Dave Green, Jill's late husband, who sadly died whilst leading a 'Walk for London' through the park.



Others may rate the 550 yard Woolwich foot tunnel, The Thames Barrier, Eltham Palace Park, Crystal Palace, Tooting or Wandsworth Common, The Wimbledon All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet club, 3 miles Thames Path crossing the river at the half tide Richmond lock and weir, the lesser known Paddington Basin Branch towpath of The Grand Union Canal, Brent Reservoir, Clissold Park, Walthamstow or Hackney Marshes, The Olympic Park and Stadium, 3 miles on The Greenway walking above the huge North Orbital Sewage pipes to Abbey Mills Pumping Station ("*The Cathedral of Sewage*"), or Albert Docks and London City Airport higher up your personal best list.

My third and final suggestion. Try to talk to as many Londoners as you can on your walk. Without exception, we found everyone friendly, extremely interested in the walk (always wondered what those Big Ben posts were) and happy to reveal a little about their very different, diverse lives and neighbourhoods.

I hope this has persuaded some readers to discover The Capital Ring Walk in a manner that best suits you.....and once you are finished you may find, like me, that the 125 mile LOOP, London Outer Orbital Path, now beckons.

Jill goes 'round the Mulberry Bush'



Jill, sitting on "Dave's bench" in Fryent Country Park



"We're not scared!" Jill, Jim and Phil – plus friends – in Crystal Palace Park



Abbey Mills Pumping Station – ‘Cathedral of Sewage’

WEALDEN WATERS WALK (WWW) 1981 – a few reminiscences

NEIL HIGHAM

You may have seen some mention of this event, which was inaugurated in 1981; your Editor was living in an old mansion house in deepest Surrey at the time, approximately half-way up the tallest hill in the south east (*look up Anstie Grange, approx 1.5 miles, 65° / ENE of the Leith Hill summit*). I was not in the Kent Group at the time, and so am perhaps making a few assumptions

The **Surrey Summits 100K** walk (usually held in April) was well established by then (this has now essentially been replaced by the 50 mile Surrey Tops – interesting fact: anybody seen running on the earlier Surrey Summits was summarily disqualified, with some marshals even hiding behind trees in order to spot those cheating!) and Kent Group had the bright idea of a similar (100K) walk covering parts of the county (the WWW has now effectively been replaced by the 50 mile White Cliffs Challenge Walk), though in truth it was actually 4 counties in total that were visited (Kent, Surrey and the two Sussexes).

With the Essex Herts Group’s equivalent and very muddy **Three Forests Way**, usually held at the end of October / beginning of November, this meant that there was a triumvirate of 100K walks in the south east, and this quickly became a theme, with a separate badge and certificate for the three completions in a set period of time, usually three years – this was the Southern Triple Challenge (and, yes, this was effectively the forerunner of what is now the KSS 50 miler triple challenge, with the Sussex (Stride) having replaced Essex Herts, and with the overall mileage being some 20% lower).

The WWW was always held in early / mid October, initially on a biennial basis – with the ‘last’ one being in 2003*. It was even held in 1987, when it certainly lived up to its ‘water’ name, this being the very, very, wet weekend just a few days before the hurricane that devastated large parts of southern England, including of course, Kent. Anyway, I digress somewhat

**The event did make a comeback in July 2014, as part of Kent Group’s 40th anniversary, albeit with a slightly revised route.*

It didn’t dawn upon me at the time – and in fact it is probably only in the last five years that I really cottoned on (well, it was over 40 years ago, there were no internet searches in those days, and no one map really covered all of this ground, at least not in such detail! *{although you may just wish to call me ‘thick’!}*) – but the two images overleaf **clearly** show, to me at least, why this event included ‘**Wealden**’ and ‘**Waters**’ in the title.

The route visited the three most prominent / visible inland water features in the south east – starting from Tunbridge Wells, the route went south east to skirt the northern side of **Bewl Water / Reservoir**, then criss-crossed country, through Ashdown Forest to Nutley before turning north and following the Sussex Border Path along the northern side of **Weir Wood Reservoir**. By now, darkness would have fallen for all and it was onwards to round the northern edge of **Bough Beech Reservoir** (with a checkpoint in the Nature Reserve barn, where the toilet had a very well-hidden light pull!), before making our way back to Tunbridge Wells in the early hours of Sunday.

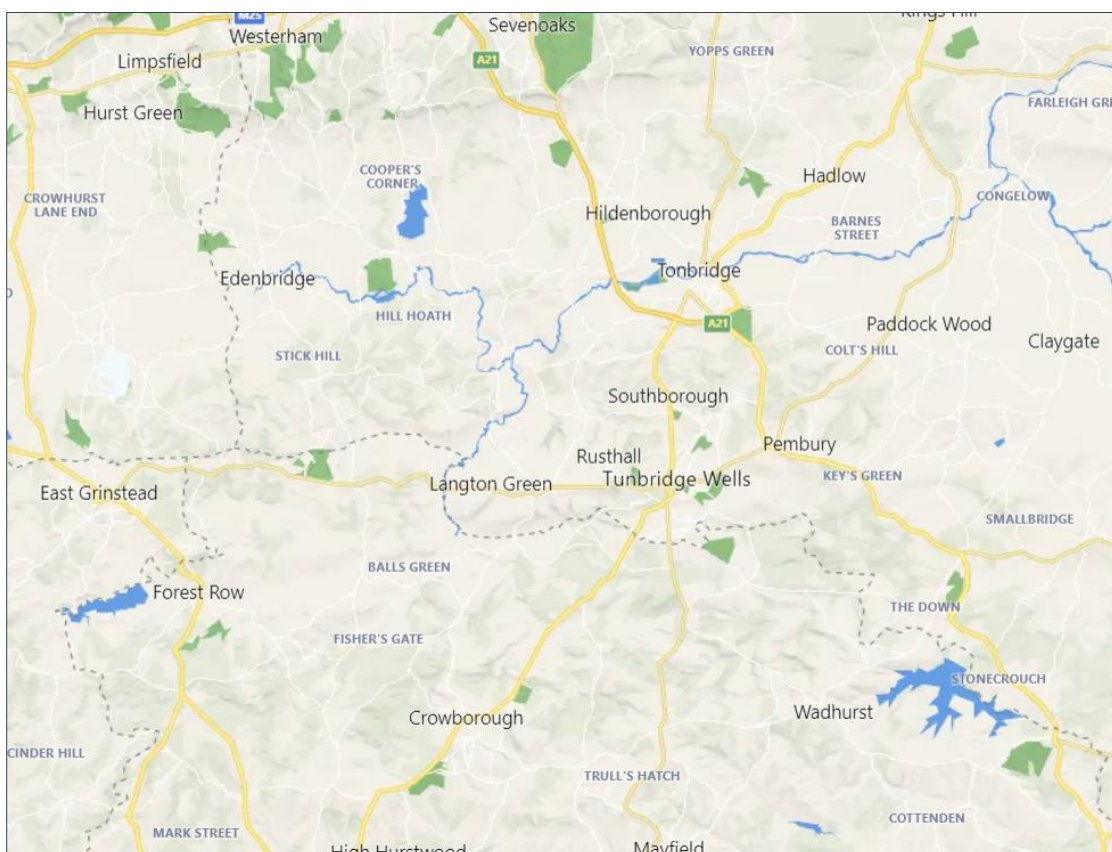
A certain Mark Pickard had entered the inaugural event, as a runner (they started some 4 hours later than us mere mortals). The previous weekend, Mark had completed what was then a UK record for the most miles run in 24 hours, of over 163 miles (on an athletics track); surely, 100K would be just a simple ‘walk in the park’ for him?

To cut a long story short, it was a gruelling event and there were only 31 successes out of 84 starters, with – if I remember correctly – most of us finishers being mere minutes inside the time limit (which I recall, perhaps incorrectly, as being 26 hours).

The finishers included the aforementioned Mark, who recounted how, during the middle of the night, he and a fellow entrant had been chased by a horse in a paddock that they were crossing – maybe it was my companions or, perhaps more likely, me who had spooked the horse (*er, this is of course just me being terribly, terribly, modest, and not quite saying out loud that I actually finished in front of a UK record holder ... albeit that he was some 3½ hours quicker overall!*).

I cannot now recall how Mark travelled to Tunbridge Wells (but most likely by public transport; he was well known for this), but I can certainly attest to how he returned to Reigate – and that was with his head firmly planted on my left shoulder as I drove him home, with me desperately trying my best not to wake him up!

And that, my friends, is almost certainly my only connection – at least so far – with anybody or anything approaching the status of true ‘celebrity’. Further references to the WWW can be found in various editions of Strider, available on the main LDWA website



GROUP / SOCIAL WALKS

These walks have continued and our website contains a bountiful number of photographs. This Newsletter is always pleased to receive a 'Walk Report' for each walk – and it doesn't have to be from the walk leader. There is but one Report for this edition.

ALLITERATION P – PLATT, PLAXTOL & SOME PECKHAMS 27TH MARCH PETER JULL

11 gathered by the pee place in Hadlow to uncomfortably find it closed these last 2 years. Starting north along the Bourne valley the river was met and followed and crossed from time to time. Our first attendee recruited via Meetup, was alliteratively named Poppy and the first photo stop was at Plaxtol church. Heading down to that river again, four yearlings were trying to recreate the Lloyds Bank advert for us, except they weren't all black. A southbound Ramblers group encountered and elevenses taken at a bench above Basted, our northbound leg ended at the 2nd photo stop at Platt church. Now southbound into Mereworth Woods, what would have been mud a week or three before was hard underfoot or where it wasn't there were firm winds around. Mothers' Day mothers were crowding the Swan on the Green in West Peckham but the green has plentiful benches for lunch. The first day of British Summer Time was overcast with gloves resorted to by some as any breeze was chilling. Continuing on the Wealdway and through orchards and Peckham Bush, it was a relief to find the pee place in East Peckham open. The River Medway was followed awhile, but abandoned prematurely at a misread sign. Regaining the planned route brought the Hadlow folly into distant view, coming closer until 19+ miles were finished in 7 hours.

SNIPPETS / DID YOU HEAR? *(or useless / irrelevant material, depending upon your point of view)*

As with my previous three 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.

Sign of things to come? (I hope not) – I, for one, might not have believed this without the photo

LOLLIPOP MAN BIZARRELY STOPS PEOPLE USING FOOTPATH WHILE GRASS IS BEING CUT

MARCH 22



Lots of people thought the scene was 'a joke'

Birds, wildlife, rolling fields – all things you would expect to see on a walk through a national park... but a lollipop man wielding a giant stop sign? In a bizarre scenario, walkers visiting the 16,500 acre Cowdray Estate, in Midhurst, West Sussex, in the South Downs National Park, were stopped in their tracks by a man wearing a bright orange jacket, ear defenders and holding a big red stop sign; they were also greeted by the notice reading: 'Temporary Footway Closure. Pedestrians Wait Here.'

The lollipop man was there to prevent people from getting too close to some strimming work that was taking place nearby. Walkers were asked to stop at the sign and wait for it to change – however, most didn't bother to hang around and simply took a wider route around the work. Many were left confused by the situation.

The rambler who took the photo, and who didn't wish to be named, said: 'They were strimming some areas. Health and Safety has in my opinion on this occasion gone a bit far with the stop-go lollipop.; they probably would have had to stop strimming had I

walked past but I took a different path.' The walker wasn't the only one to be amused by the measures, with dozens commenting on the 'ridiculous and absurd' scene while asking if it was a joke. One said: 'The Stop and Go lollipop is a tad over the top.'

One person suggested that the precaution was to prevent legal action. 'If you walked past and debris was flung into your eye would you then sue the contractor? Sadly, many would.' A spokesperson for the National Park emphasised it was not behind the work, but understood why precautions had been taken. West Sussex County Council and Midhurst Town Council said they had no knowledge of the work.

[Another Health and Safety story](#)

FURY ERUPTS, A57 SNAKE PASS PUT UNDER 24/7 GUARD, BIKES & WALKERS BANNED MARCH 22

The decision to close a major Trans Penine A-road to all road users, including cyclists and **walkers**, was met with contempt and ridicule. The A57 Snake Pass, which links Sheffield and Glossop and is a key route to Manchester, is known for its stunning views but it will now be closed to all, Derbyshire County Council announced. The announcement was made on March 8, on social media and was met with staunch opposition. The council says the decision was made for "safety reasons". This comes after the 1,697ft high road became popular with cyclists and walkers, who flocked to the route ever since the road was shut to drivers due to landslides caused by the recent storms.

Posting on Twitter from the council's official account, a spokesperson for the local authority said: "From today we are closing the A57 Snake Pass to all users, including cyclists and walkers, apart from those who live there or their visitors, because of concerns over safety. The road now has barriers with someone monitoring it 24/7."

Twitter users thundered back, letting the council know of their "disappointment" over the decision, some calling it "pure madness". One said: "It is really disappointing to hear. There was a festival atmosphere there last weekend, with families and kids as well as lots of cyclists. Why spoil the fun? It's a rare opportunity for people to enjoy the road when cars can't." A second added "There has been no Risk Assessment to show that the road is dangerous for cyclists & walkers when closed."

Another complainant wrote: "Pure madness! There is little concern for safety normally, with cyclists getting close passed and motorists using it as a racetrack/overtaking left right and centre. Currently at its safest for walkers and cyclist and you close it. Give your head a wobble..."

The council responded: "It is for safety reasons. There are still a small number of vehicles, those who live there and our own vehicles. With large numbers of cyclists we don't want an accident. Thanks."

[Please don't try this at home](#)

MOUNTAINEER FELL 650 FEET DOWN HELVELLYN – AND SURVIVED

MARCH 22

A mountaineer was dubbed 'the human rubber ball' after he fell 650ft down a mountain in the Lake District but bounced to safety and survived; the man lost his footing and slipped while he was climbing and hiking to the snow-clad summit of Helvellyn in the Lake District.



The Keswick Mountain Rescue Team was scrambled amid fears he would not have survived the terrifying plunge - but miraculously the man escaped without suffering serious injuries. The 650ft (200m) fall was even higher than the height of the Blackpool Tower which measures 518ft (158m).

'It's like he was a human rubber ball and somehow bounced to safety down the mountain side', said one rescuer.

After he was located by Red Tarn on the east side of Helvellyn, the man – who fortunately was able to walk away - was airlifted to hospital for further checks due to concerns over a potential spinal injury.

[Them mountains, they keep a movin'](#)

A SNEAKY PEAK – WALES GAINS ANOTHER MOUNTAIN (DUE TO QUARRYING)

MAY 22

Myrddyn Phillips, a hillwalker, surveyor and map-maker, has pinpointed what he believes is a new mountain in north Wales that has been created by quarrying; he has spent the last two decades sizing up obscure peaks to judge if they qualify for mountain status, and has concluded that a piece of high ground at a quarry near Blaenau Ffestiniog passes the test. Phillips said that part of a peak called Manod Mawr North Top had been eroded by quarrying, leading to the formation of a second top, slightly lower – but high enough to qualify as a mountain. It is to be added to Phillips' list of "Welsh Highlands" – hills in Wales that are more than 2,000ft (609 metres) high with a 49ft drop to the col – the saddle or ridge between two peaks.

He said it was the first time since the list was launched in 2004 that a chunk of high ground in Wales had been upgraded to mountain status because of human intervention. Phillips said: "The mountain was first spotted on an online map by a colleague of mine – I was intrigued and needed to see this unusual peak myself. Nobody really knew it existed because it doesn't show up on the OS maps. I was looking for the vertical height gain between the col and the summit. It had once been relatively flat as it connected to the Manod Mawr North Top. By quarrying that ridge, they have created a brand new peak."

NB The peak is on private ground so, No, you cannot just go and climb it.