

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION – Kent Group

furthering the interests of those who enjoy long-distance walking

NEWSLETTER



High Weald Walking Festival 18 September



Stephanie Le Men and Andy Clark at the Ryarsh celebration



Invicta 92 Revisited part 4, 4 September



Cream Tea walk 21 August



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<https://ldwa.org.uk/kent>

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A warm welcome to the December 2022 edition of the Kent Group Newsletter and particularly to any new members. We hope to meet with you in due course. This edition incorporates the August issue of the Newsletter – think of it as a bumper seasonal issue! – and I have taken on its editing at short notice as Neil Higham is currently busy with other matters. We hope to have further news of him in a subsequent edition.

Just a reminder, that 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 shops being open.

Cathy Waters

KENT GROUP COMMITTEE

Chair	Stephanie Le Men	kent@ldwa.org.uk
Secretary	Helen Strong	secretary.kent@ldwa.org.uk
Treasurer	Peter Jull	treasurer.kent@ldwa.org.uk
Groups/Social Walks Organiser	Peter Jull	walks.kent@ldwa.org.uk
Newsletter Editor	Cathy Waters	newsletter.kent@ldwa.org.uk
Membership Secretary	David Thornton	membership.kent@ldwa.org.uk
Committee Members	Jim Briggs, Andy Clark, Nicola Foad, Penny Southern, David Thornton, Cathy Waters	
Life President (non-Committee)	Brian Buttifant	
Web Master (non-Committee)	Michael Headley	website.kent@ldwa.org.uk

Stephanie Le Men has indicated she will be standing down from her role as Chair at the next AGM and two members – Andy Clark and Neil Higham – will be standing down from the Committee. So we are seeking new members for the Committee and for roles within it. Please don't hesitate to contact one of the current members if you have any queries about volunteering for a role.



Ann Russell (standing), Joy Davies talking with Keith Warman at Hope CP, TTP100



John Gilbert and Michael Headley, on number duty at Hope CP, TTP100

THE 2022 TRANS-PENNINE 100

KENT LDWA had 10 entrants successfully complete this year's 100 (* signifies a first completion):

Don Arthurs, Tony Barter, John Cook, Jill Green, Jim Catchpole, Luke Leutner*, Lucy Morgan*, Judy Rickwood, Penny Southern* and Keith Warman, plus, not forgetting, on the Marshals Walk, Stephanie Le Men and Helen Strong.

Commiserations go to the following starters who, for various reasons, were unable to complete the route this year:

Andrew Boulden, Martin Brice, Malcolm Dyke, Andrew Gordon, Dawn Jones, Peter Jull, Don Newman, Steve Russell, David Sheldrake and Alan Stewart.

Report from Stephanie Le Men

EVERY year a team of Kent members staffs a checkpoint at the yearly LDWA Hundred. This year, our checkpoint was in Hope, in the Peak District, roughly 55 miles into the walk.

Helen Strong and I had done the marshals walk a few weeks before. It was a lovely route, very scenic. One of my favourite Hundreds – though I have only been able to realize this a few weeks after the event!

We knew that the section prior to our checkpoint would be tough: exposed to the weather, hilly, rocky and possibly very slippery if wet (yep, I fell and cursed on that very section!). The previous checkpoint was outdoors and high up, so it was very likely that people retiring there would be taken to our checkpoint to shelter. We were expecting a busy night and busy it certainly was!

The hall was well situated and we enjoyed a great view of the hills surrounding us.

A team of around ten of us gathered for a very good meal cooked by Helen. That was the relaxing part. We were checking the progress of the walkers thanks to the trackers they were carrying on them and we got very excited when the first one came through – looking very fresh I must say! More walkers soon started to come and reported it was very windy and cold up in the hills. The pasta and soup cooked by Helen and David soon warmed them up. However, we got a lot busier: we hit a long 'rush hour' with walkers



steadily coming and staying longer to enjoy the warmth of the hall, and a lot of retirees being driven from the previous checkpoint. A few of us were rushing to take orders and carry meals. David and Helen were mass-cooking pasta – I think they could not eat pasta for a while afterwards. The hall got so busy in the morning that some entrants had to sit outside.

But what a joy when a walker we knew came in! And we felt really sorry for the team staffing the previous checkpoint in the cold.

Fortunately things started to calm down and we could sit for a few minutes – my legs were aching more than when I did the Hundred!

It was soon time to close the checkpoint. I inspected the men's toilet to check everything was fine, and to my horror, a walker was sleeping peacefully on the floor, having missed the retiree van back! It was actually a member of Raynet, who had a long stint too!

We were all tired and Ken Falconer, who had spent the night at the previous outdoor checkpoint, threw the trackers in the rubbish skip and put the rubbish in his boot. Fortunately he realised just in time, and we managed to get the trackers back from the skip – to my relief no one had to climb into it. We had a very good laugh!

Many, many, many thanks to the team that was at the checkpoint – I am so grateful that you helped.

We will staff a checkpoint at the Elephant, Bull and Bear Hundred next year too – in Warwick Space Community Centre, 55 miles into the route. It should be easier though as we are not expecting retirees from the previous checkpoints. If you are free, please come and join us! The more the merrier and the easier!

Report from Andy Clark

AS we know, LDWA Challenge events can't go ahead without the help from volunteers. You'll see accounts in this newsletter from the entrants' viewpoints; here's what happened from the Marshals' perspective.

As a Group, we had been allocated Checkpoint 9 at Hope Sports Club, Hope, Derbyshire. This was 56 miles into the walk and we were scheduled to be open from 10:30 on the Friday evening right through to 11:59 on the Saturday morning.

The first task was to collect the food and other supplies from Hundred HQ at the Netherwood Academy in Wombwell, South Yorkshire. Andy and Neil, who had picked up Ann en route, met at the school around 4:30 on the Friday afternoon but there was a delay in us being able to load the cars as other (later in the route) checkpoints were being given their allocated supplies – note to the

2026 Hundred Committee that it might be a good idea to allocate time slots for each Checkpoint/Group to avoid any overlapping.

What the image below does not show are four trays of sponge cakes. These measured about three feet by eighteen inches and these all needed to arrive in one piece. Initial fears of not being able to fit everything into two cars were allayed and with some careful juggling, both cars were loaded, albeit to capacity, and we were able to leave the school at 6pm.

In normal circumstances, the 27 mile journey would have been very pleasant in the early evening sunshine and having crossed the M1, there were some lovely views across moorland above a series of reservoirs. However, the narrow roads and steep hills did give cause for some concern, bearing in mind the laden condition of the vehicles.



We arrived at the checkpoint with all of the supplies intact. Stephanie, having already arranged with the hall manager to open up at 7:30 pm, was already there and the Raynet representative had already set up his aerial outside the hall to ensure vital communication links could be maintained, not only with Headquarters but also with the other checkpoints. The setting for the checkpoint was very scenic – the image above shows the view from outside the hall.

The LDWA website described the hall as large although this turned out to be rather hyperbolic. Once Raynet had been allocated a space in a corner nearest to their outside equipment, the check-in desk had been set up as near to the entrance as possible and a table for serving hot and cold drinks near to the very small kitchen, there was only room for seven other tables for entrants to eat their food and a dozen or so other chairs along one wall.

It became apparent very quickly, because the kitchen was so small, that numbers of people inside would have to be restricted. However, the fact that there was a serving hatch meant that hot food could be passed on to the ‘waiting staff’ without the need to enter the kitchen.

It wasn't long before the other members of the first shift arrived – the original plan was to have two shifts but circumstances later on meant that we had to be more adaptable. By 9pm we were pretty much set up and we had time to share a team meal that had been expertly prepared in advance by Helen and Stephanie. Helen's vegan main course of sweet potato, chickpea and kale curry (my photo below really doesn't do it justice) was followed by Stephanie's dessert of clafoutis.



Night had fallen by now and the pleasant sunshine and light breeze had been replaced by darkness and a stronger wind – the temperature has dropped considerably. All that was missing now were our ‘customers’.

This year each entrant carried a tracker which meant that, at any time, anyone looking at the live tracking feed could see where each entrant was – a definite improvement on the previously used PACER system. This meant that we could reasonably predict how many people were expected to arrive at the checkpoint at any one time. However, even with the benefit of modern technology, we still benefited from ‘an old way’ as we could see head torch beams approaching from some way out.

In the days after the Marshals’ walk, we had crunched some numbers to try and estimate when our busier periods might be – we were fairly accurate on these. Although we didn’t expect any entrants to arrive before midnight, our first walker arrived at 11:33pm.

If we thought that it had turned cold at our lower level, our first ‘customer’ confirmed how cold it was on the higher ground around Mam Tor and Mam Nick. We soon realised that our hot food offerings of pasta with sauce and cheese or soup would be more popular than we first envisaged. We had one further arrival before midnight but after that, there was just a trickle of walkers; by 2:30 on Saturday morning we had 25 walkers pass through our checkpoint.

Other notable milestones during the course of the day:

100th arrival at 4:53

200th arrival at 7:09

250th arrival at 9:34

There were several times when all of the available table spaces were taken and some walkers spilled onto the benches on the verandah outside the club.

20 other walkers arrived during the remaining time we were open but there was a steady stream of retirees who came down by car from the previous outdoor checkpoint at Mam Nick to await the Body Bus to take them back to Headquarters.

By the time our official closing time, 11:59, had been reached, we still had one walker to arrive and she arrived shortly afterwards but in any case, she had decided to retire at Hope due to an injury.

Once the Body Bus had picked up all of our remaining visitors, all we had to do was to pack up the remaining supplies which needed to be returned to Headquarters and to clean the hall. Fortunately, because of the mainly dry conditions, there was very little mud. However, there was still a twist!

As the club was used for both football and rugby matches, there were two reasonably spacious dressing rooms and we had allowed volunteers and retirees to use these to grab some sleep. After the last Body Bus had departed for Wombwell, we ‘discovered’ what we originally thought was one of our walkers still fast asleep in the dressing room. However, we later found out was that he was one of the Raynet volunteers.

Although Jim and Sheila had agreed to return the unused supplies to Wombwell, they didn’t have the spare capacity for a passenger but fortunately Andrew volunteered to return our ‘Sleeping Beauty’.

With the hall cleaned and the Kent Group equipment packed away, we were able to depart from the hall by 2pm.

If, after reading this article, you fancy being part of an LDWA Hundred but don’t feel as if you want to walk 100 miles, please consider volunteering for the next Hundred. We have offered to run another checkpoint in 2023 on the Elephant, Bear and Bull Hundred and we have provisionally been allocated a checkpoint in Warwick. Whilst we don’t have final details at the moment, it is expected that the time schedules will be similar to this year.

It was my (Andy) first experience of checkpointing on a Hundred and I found it very rewarding; virtually all of the walkers were very grateful for the efforts of the volunteers. If you are interested, please let any of the Committee members know.

Below is the list of roles and volunteers, but it should be stressed that everybody pitched in wherever necessary. Thank you to all of our volunteers who contributed to the smooth and successful running of the checkpoint.

Check In	Jim and Sheila Briggs, John Gilbert and Michael Headley
Kitchen / Hot Food	Helen Strong and David Thornton
Drinks	Joy Davies and Ann Russell
Waiting Staff	Neil Higham, Stephanie Le Men, Andrew Melling and Dale Moorhouse
Meeting and Greeting	Andy Clark



Kent CP at Hope, TTP100

REPORTS FROM TRANS-PENNINE 100 ENTRANTS

From Tony Barter

ANOTHER one finished! My third, if one is allowed to count the virtual 100 from last year.

In terms of difficulty the Trans-Pennine was on par with the Hadrian 100 and certainly a lot harder than my own creation of 2021.

Having left the start at Wombwell at 09:00 it was an easy start along the Trans-Pennine trail through the first 2 checkpoints; as the day progressed, I was getting more and more grumpy as the route seemed to be avoiding public houses, and the squash in my bottle wasn't as appealing as earlier on. It wasn't until 20:33, a time well remembered, that a pub was encountered; fortunately the route description made no mention of passing the 'Palatine', so I didn't!

Checkpoint 7 at Hayfield was where I had to take a little time, I was now starting to struggle with nausea and eating was proving difficult, but with many, many thanks to the lovely ladies of Norfolk & Suffolk, I was sustained with Ginger Beer and jelly, enough so that after 40 minutes I was able to continue.

The route up to Mam Nick was hard on the feet, rocks & stones, just what was needed after 45 miles, NOT! Heart of Scotland were providing Pot Noodles amongst other things, what a delight, it may well have been many years since I've had one, but what a treat when eating is proving difficult.

With renewed vigour it was off to Hope and Checkpoint 9, just Mam Tor, Hollins Cross & Lose Hill to climb first. Daylight was appearing and it was time to turn the headtorch off as the checkpoint neared. It's a fantastic feeling walking into your own group's checkpoint, the lift that you get when being greeted by name is priceless. A little sit down outside (it was so hot inside), some toast and jam and a chat with Andy & Neil, it was time for a very long 6 miles to breakfast at Hathersage, the walk along the riverbank seemed to go on and on.

Hathersage, Checkpoint 10, 62.2 miles, a shower, albeit a cold one and breakfast, now it was all downhill, apart from the uphill of course! Just a mere 38 miles to go.

I'm afraid that Cornwall & Devon, at Worrall, may believe that I'm rude. I had barely sat down when I realised there was a pub just down the road, this time I didn't follow the route description to the letter and instead of passing the Blue Ball Inn I entered, bliss!

Worrall to Wortley had the last of the real ascents and once at Wortley it was just a matter of keeping moving for the final 17 miles. It's always the final miles that feel like a real slog, each mile takes that little bit longer, that checkpoint seems a little bit further away.

Elsecar, 4 miles from the finish, is a beacon in my memories, beer in a barrel at a checkpoint! In a perfect world every checkpoint would have beer and Pot Noodles.

The final section was again along the Trans-Pennine trail, and again, although only 4 miles, seemed to take an age, the finish was a welcome sight and to hear the applause and ringing of the bell when you come through the door is an uplifting moment.

My thanks go to everyone who organised and volunteered to enable the 100, my heart goes out to those who didn't succeed.



From Peter Jull

PARKED at Netherwood Academy and wandered in to register at queue free H-L desk. Tracker collection queue was long but moving quickly while saying several hellos. Longer chat with Penny & Don Arthurs before returning to car to collect bags & change shoes. To bend more easily to tie laces, wallet & phone out of pockets and propped on edge of boot. Still there when shoes in boot and lid closed; scratch one phone. Dropped off breakfast bag and it was barely 5 to 9 when back outside to catch the ending of a speech and everyone was off.

Being on the outside of the crowd I'm near the front along the tarmacked old railway track. At the 2nd road crossing Andy Todd's photos clearly show the perspiration has already set in. Brief detour off the track to CP1 then more old railway until a tunnel obliges a climb over its hill. I start to fall back through the field. Extensive sandwich spread at CP2 and 1st dose of Dioralyte. Martin Brice arrives as I leave. Beyond Penistone the route undulates more. 10 o'clock starters Wendy Thurrell and Andrew Boulden sweep past effortlessly. A novice lady Pat from Birmingham is similar paced and chats a lot. At barn CP3 Don Newman & Judy Rickwood are there. Pat asks to stick with me. She has recce'd the route and her recollections are sometimes helpful through the complexities above Holmfirth.

After CP4 moorland begins. The climb up Black Hill is not too hard but the lowering sun is right in the eye line. Don Arthurs catches and joins. Unfamiliar with the nature of Laddow Rocks I only notice the path becoming increasingly rocky and break out a walking pole as the descent begins. Others later mentioned a freezing hoolie (which I thought was just a refreshing breeze) at least blowing away from the precipice. I was clearly looking at my feet too much and saw nothing like the internet pictures looked up later. The descent was hard though and the faint twinkle of CP lights seen from the top were glowing brightly in the gloom before we got there.

Head torch brightness looked OK in the hall but dim as leg 6 began. Still with Don & Pat, stopped to change batteries. Didn't work. Tried other batteries; didn't work. Put old batteries back; didn't work. Pressed on sharing the light of Don & Pat's torches. Worked OK along more old railway, less so across rougher terrain. Resolved to sleep off most of the dark at Dinting and hope to borrow a torch at Hope. Emerging from 90 minutes of fitful snooze, Dave Sheldrake was there waiting for the body wagon. Dawn Jones was blistered out and when I intended to leave with Andy, lent me her torch. That, and Andy's smart watch, helped through the remaining darkness. Andy took a tumble off one of those stone step stiles and not long afterwards was clearly developing a lean. I recommended he lie down a while at CP7 Hayfield and take a concentrated rehydration pill.

With time pressing, pressed on. Hilly again but not Laddow. Alan Stewart and Elaine Oddie caught and passed. Later caught and passed Alan & Elaine. From the car park, lots of tourists over Mam Tor and along the following ridge. A best bit of the route in my view. Tourists, many young adults, coming up the other way from Hope as well. At Hope I was only 30 minutes before closing time so little chance to chat with the Kent crew. A flat(ter) section next, once over a cross gradient climb out of Hope and clambering over that wall that was supposed to be a stile. A pleasant stretch along the Derwent Valley Path felt good but reflecting later, that dog walkers and a bunch of Duke of Edinburgh girls overtook me, was not a good sign.

Made it to Hathersage with only 10 minutes to spare. Refused bag, food and water; just gave my number and scarpered before there was any excuse to time me out. Climbing out of the valley I overtook another straggler, I wasn't last anymore. Plodding to the top of Stanage Edge the video guy jogged up behind me for an interview. Climbing done, chance to make up time on the flat, he jogged on but the leaning over kicked in. Stumbling on, the sweepers caught me and escorted me into Moscar. After 67 miles my active participation in the Trans-Pennine 100 was over.

From Penny Southern

'One should always have a definite objective, in a walk as in life – it is so much more satisfying to reach a target by personal effort than to wander aimlessly. An objective is an ambition, and life without ambition is.....well, aimless wandering.' – A. Wainwright

MY hero AW inspired me to walk a long way and the LDWA was the perfect place to support my passion for walking long distances so the 100 was always on my list to do, I just needed a push. Peter provided the push and before I knew it I'd signed up for the virtual 100 in 2021 which gave me the qualification (I completed 60 miles, the furthest I'd ever walked in one go) to register for The Trans Pennine 100 in 2022.

Which happened to be taking place across the Peak District, close to where I was born and spent 24 years of my life enjoying the hills plus it was 3 weeks before my 60th birthday, so why wouldn't I take on one of the biggest challenges in my lifetime?

During a rainy cold day in December 2021 I thought it best to complete my 100 training plan and sign up to a few long walks. I needed to attend solo to sharpen my ropey navigation skills. I was determined to stick with a paper route description and not rely on a GPS plus I needed to increase my confidence walking alone at night. With these objectives in mind I organised a number of events and made sure I was walking up to 40 miles every week. All this would take me close to the starting date of the 100 and would give me the tools I needed to get to the start line.

The Devils Punchbowl 30 miles in February was a turning point. Despite the downpour, I navigated myself round in a good time, only managing to get lost getting to my car at the end. It was here I met PB who recommended the Ridgeway 40 early May which I booked and used this event to test my endurance and pace. I did loads of LDWA social walks in between, the Sevenoaks Marshalls 30 (thank you David) was a big help, also a week spent in North Berwick walking the John Muir path managing 70 miles as the



weather was so incredible.

With my car packed and the Travelodge booked, I set off for Barnsley on the 2/6 full of anticipation and lots of fabulous positive messages from family, friends and Kent LDWA members, in particular Steph and Helen who had completed the marshals 100 a few weeks before – what a fantastic achievement – which gave me even more determination to get the job done.

This was my first 100, I'd never walked more than 60 miles in one go, I was scared of walking alone in the dark and PJ can confirm that my navigation skills were rubbish. However I'd done all the training I'd set out to do, I'd practiced my navigation skills over and over again and I decided that I could run faster than anyone who was thinking of scaring me in the middle of the night.... I was ready.....

On the morning of the start I decided to set off at 9am, with the strategy (having listened to many seasoned 100ers) of starting steady, settling myself in and feeling comfortable with the enormity of the task ahead plus making sure I didn't hit the first checkpoint before it opened....

No idea what happened to that plan. When asked about 3 miles in, what my strategy was for my first 100? I replied.... to finish, not get lost and not go through a second night. This felt more like my approach to most things... just do it.... So off I went, found my pace, kept my finger on my route description and kept going..... Amazing ascents and descents, breath-taking panoramic views, beautiful wildlife, near perfect conditions... what a route.

At each check point I left the previous section of route description in the bin. This was very motivating, having started with 17 sections, watching the pile disappear was genius, I was seeing it as 17 short walks, with one long buffet, each one ending with a bunch of friendly and incredibly helpful volunteers who couldn't do enough for you... fabulous Hope checkpoint was going to be emotional, I'd decided if I got to Hope amongst Kent LDWA friends, I'd do a stock take, on my mind, body and soul, it was certainly the place to hang up my boots had I got it so wrong....

I arrived at 4am having navigated my way through Hayfield not seeing anyone, up and down Mam Tor with just a few head torches in the distance, I didn't think at this point anything could stop me.... Helen's tomato pasta went down a treat and I was off again, feeling great and looking forward to breakfast at Hathersage and getting up to Stanage Edge.....

Remarkably I felt good, not tired, body and feet ok, I was just hungry and not sure what I should eat next. I sailed through CP 11, 12, 13 loving the walking, the scenery and the company along the way but also thinking, if I keep going, my not going into the second night strategy may just be on the cards.

Plus one amazing checkpoint volunteer sorted my diet out. Having struggled to eat a jacket potato she emerged from the kitchen with a bowl of jelly and tin peaches, what a life saver.... This and a yogurt CP14 did the trick, I was back firing on all cylinders and when a text came through saying my tracker was estimating a 9pm Saturday evening finish, it was all I needed to stay on track.

CP15 I zoomed through and arrived at CP16. I was looking at my final route description saying 4 miles left.... Well that's a warm up and a parkrun, crack on.... So I did....I left Elsecar at 6:56:58 arriving back at HQ at 20:12 Saturday the 4th of June, 101.1 miles in 35 hours 12 minutes.

Wow that felt amazing and I was in one piece....what an experience. Mind, body and soul complete – thank you LDWA for giving me the opportunity, loved it all.

From Keith Warman

BY 'eck, 'appen t'Undred was back in Yorkshire again this year. It was a splendid event, organised by Vermuyden Group under the leadership of Aaron Hookway. Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed the experience (although my feet would instantly disagree with that bold assertion).

The route was circular and widdershins from Wombwell, near Barnsley, crossing the Pennines twice and with about 12,500 feet of both ascent and descent. The first 10 and final 18 miles included some of the gentlest sections I've known on any Hundred, but in between were some of the toughest legs I've experienced – particularly the exposed and tricky traverse of Laddow Rocks.

The Best Bits

- Meeting old friends again at registration.
- David Morgan presenting me with my 30 x Hundreds award just before the start. (*Keith's 30th completion was in 2021 – on the Virtual 100.*)



- Visiting sites of railway interest along the Woodhead railway route, including Silkstone Tunnels and a disused turntable pit at Penistone.
- The wonderful welcome and encouragement at each checkpoint, many of which were adorned with bunting for The Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations.
- In beautiful evening sunshine, crossing the Pennine watershed via the remote Black Hill.
- Relief upon arriving at Crowden checkpoint (33 miles) with Angela and Tony Walton, having descended from said Laddow Rocks in one piece.
- The wonderful welcome and encouragement at Hope checkpoint (56 miles). It was also the first time I had seen Shirlie since the start. She quickly sorted out a space for me to steal forty winks.
- Spotting a steam train on the riverside walk between Hope and Hathersage. An unexpected bonus!
- Walking across the moorland immediately below Stanage Edge (65 miles) with its amazing rock formations, huge boulders and discarded mill-stones.
- David Morgan wearing an exceedingly over-sized, bright red Welsh flat cap at Pilley checkpoint. (*see adjacent photo*)
- Passing through the manicured Wentworth Woodhouse estate in first light on Sunday and being caught up by Len Fallick. We then walked together to the finish.
- Approaching the final checkpoint at Elsecar (96 miles), Len and I were met by Ian 'Spike' Millican, Len's 'chauffeur' from Northumbria Group. Spike's canny wit and banter, coupled with his extraordinary Geordie accent, certainly lifted our spirits.
- Accompanying Len for some of his 40th Hundred and witnessing his presentation. He received a certificate, badge and engraved glass tumbler for his incredible achievement.



8:31 pm and wonderful late evening sunshine at Black Hill trig point

- Shirlie's excellent support and constant cheer, especially during my low moments.
- The satisfaction of completing the Trans-Pennine Hundred with such a varied and interesting route. It included disused railway tracks, south Pennine farmland, reservoirs, an immaculate cricket ground, beautiful woodlands, stone walls as far as the eye could see, an ancient packhorse bridge, open moorland, the drama of Laddow Rocks, an enormous railway viaduct, the Great Ridge between Mam Nick and Lose Hill, rocky outcrops, delightful villages, Wharcliffe Woods and Crags and the industrial archaeology (mining and canals) of the Elsecar area.

Some Not-Quite-So-Best Bits

- The steep, rocky and slow descent from Laddow Rocks (30 miles) is firmly etched in my memory. This section seemed never-ending. Thankfully, I required my torch for just the final 15 minutes into Crowden.
- The ascent and descent in the 7.60 miles from Hayfield to Mam Nick (52 miles), mostly on rough stony tracks, were quite testing. We were battling through a bitter and fierce wind. I was so very cold that, on arrival at Mam Nick checkpoint, I advised Tony and Angela I must keep moving and left alone along the Great Ridge.
- Feeling quite ill at Wentworth (90 miles), I knew I needed to lay down for a short while. I managed an awkward half-snooze on the floor and I felt better when I awoke and ate a little food. Ready to push on (it was now 4:30 am with the first hint of daylight), Shirlie said that Len had arrived and would be on his way as soon as he had finished his cup of tea. I decided to leave knowing Len would soon catch me up – he did.

Some Off-Beat Bits

- An unforgettable moment at the start. After 500 yards I realised I had forgotten my sunhat. It was languishing in my breakfast bag in the school headquarters. As I hastened back into the school, I was spotted by organiser Aaron Hookway who shouted out, 'First man back – well done Keith lad!' Aaron and his marshals gave me a rousing round of applause. Wonderful. I rescued my hat and set off yet again.
- Approaching the Bird's Edge checkpoint (18 miles), an elderly gentleman tending his front garden asked me if I was on this here hundred mile walk. I said that I was. He replied, 'Well 'ow far 'ave yer done, lud?' 'About 18 miles,' I replied. He instantly responded with, 'Then yer'll nivver get back afore dark'.
- Passing through Hadfield (36 miles) just after midnight on the Friday, Tony, Angela and I were joined by a couple of others, one of whom was using large walking poles. A taxi suddenly screeched to a halt and a local, who was 'excessively refreshed', lurched out of the car. He took one look at the walker with poles and bellowed, 'You won't find much snow to ski down around 'ere, luv'.
- During Saturday night, Tony, Len and I were carefully navigating the twisty, narrow, rocky paths through woods below Wharcliffe Crags. We suddenly heard a very loud noise. I suggested it might be an engine of sorts. In a flash, we were blinded

by headlights and had to jump aside as two motorbikes scrambled past us in the opposite direction. Their registration plates were carefully covered in black plastic . . .

In Conclusion

My usual congratulations go to all those who started this quite tough Hundred – the finishing percentage was about 70%, which is in line with the long-term average.

I would like to thank the organising committee, together with all marshals, friends and helpers, for planning this wonderful Hundred and for looking after us so well over the weekend. I also wish to record sincere thanks to all Kent Group members who gave up their Platinum Jubilee weekend to travel north and run such an excellent checkpoint at Hope.

LDWA 50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS



Kent Group's LDWA 50th Anniversary and Post-Hundred Party was held on Sunday 19th June – Report from Helen Strong and David Thornton

THIS year Kent group decided to celebrate these two occasions in one. In the run up to the anniversary, the committee decided that the event should be as inclusive as possible, and it was agreed that a short walk and party in a village hall would be a fitting way of bringing all generations of the group together.

The venue of Ryarsh village hall was suggested by David, as the facilities were good, with a very pleasant outdoor area – underneath the Kentish North Downs – offering some scenic route options. Around twenty-five people joined the eight mile walk, the highlight of which was at the top of Holly Hill where a panoramic view was enjoyed by all – and which also overlooked the hall from which the group started.

At the end of the stroll, the walkers were joined by around a further fifteen members of the group, some with friends and family, for a relaxed get-together. The village hall was perfect – a large terrace and green space at the back for folks to meet and catch up, and plenty of space inside in case of inclement weather.

The catering was a hit – Helen co-ordinated what is sometimes called a 'pot-luck' system. In advance, guests were asked what they would like to contribute – just so that there were not 30 quiches and nothing else! There was a good spread of salads and homecooked favourites, something for all, the tables were groaning with all that delicious food. Nicola kindly offered to make not one, but two large cakes to celebrate, and they went down very well indeed.



In the middle of the afternoon, Brian Buttifant gave a speech congratulating those who had completed the hundred this year, especially the newbies.

Time seemed to fly, so it was not long before it was time to tidy up. As ever, we all worked hard to leave the venue in tip-top condition. Many thanks to all those who helped to tidy away in the hall and the kitchen. Big thanks to Eve who helped to set up with Helen in the morning.

The party was such a success we plan on hosting the Kent post-100 party and general group social get-together in Ryarsh next year. So, if you could not make it this time – then perhaps we will see you on this occasion next year.

CHRISTMAS MEAL 2022

From Stephanie Le Men

THERE is a change of venue this year for our Christmas meal – Jan and Neal O'Rourke, despite having decided to retire from organising this event, kindly investigated venues for us once more. The winner is the Bearsted golf club, booked for the 4th of December. It is very close to Bearsted train station, so guests can enjoy a few drinks if they elect to come by train! Jim Briggs will lead the traditional pre-launch walk, and Jim and his wife Sheila are trying their best to find a route that is not too muddy, and that can be enjoyed by both members and their family.

At the time of going to press, more than thirty members have registered for the meal, so this is a very good turnout. If you haven't registered and would like to come, please contact Stephanie Le Men at kent@ldwa.org.uk, who will let you know if there is still time to register. I am really looking forward to that day and having fun with a lovely bunch of people! See you soon and merry Christmas to the rest of our members! Why not join us next year?

OBITUARIES

Celia Bishop

Brian Buttifant writes

IT was sad to hear that Celia had passed away at age 92 on May 22nd this year. Celia was the wife of Ernie, a past Kent Group and NEC Chairman, and a committed member of our Group. Celia enjoyed our social walks with their dog Clem and some events, e.g. Sevenoaks Circular and the Rottingdean Windmill. She was a good checkpoint and a friend of many in the LDWA, so will be missed in walking circles. Her other interests included sailing (they lived near Bewl Water).

Our condolences to their daughter Sally and other family members.

Nick Dockree

IT is with great sadness that we report the death of group stalwart Nick Dockree after a long illness.

Nick, who was 78 and whose LDWA number was 14247, died on July 19 after a long illness. He was a great servant to the group, helping on checkpoints at our challenge walks and at our checkpoint on the annual Hundred, when he would drive to venues all over the country and often take our Life President Brian Buttifant (who does not drive) with him. He joined the Kent committee in 2008, stepping down in 2020 because of health issues. He once represented the group at the LDWA's national AGM.

In earlier years Nick was a great walker, taking part in scores of LDWA challenge events. He started five Hundreds, completing two (the 1998 White Peak and 2000 Millennium marshals' event) and retiring on three (1996 Yorkshire Dales, 1997 Downsman and 1999 Durham Dales).



Nick checkpointing on the 2013 Sevenoaks Circular, wearing the group's distinctive Kent Welcomes You T-shirt

Nick was brought up in Hemel Hempstead and on leaving school joined the Army, serving in the Royal Artillery for six years. Leaving the Army, he worked for 30 years as a lathe engineer. Nick lived in Brighton for 50 years, and was a great supporter of Brighton & Hove Albion FC, known as 'The Seagulls'.

Health issues restricted Nick's walking in recent years but he still helped out on checkpoints and regularly attended the group's monthly pub meetings at Wrotham. He enjoyed going to the group's annual Christmas meal, and attended the last one, held at Etchinghill in December last year, with members of his family.

Keith Warman, former Kent committee member and the LDWA's national Hundreds Recorder, said: 'Nick readily volunteered to help on our events and he missed very few of our monthly pub meetings. Nick was always cheerful, despite his health problems of late.'

'My distant memory reminds me of two occasions when Nick stationed himself alone to wait for my wife Shirly and me on marshals' walks of Kent Group events to provide us with sustenance and encouragement; the first was at Burwash car park on a stinking hot day one July (Heart of the Weald) when he was ready with cold drinks for us following a stiff climb; and the second was on a lane just after New Barns Farm (Wealden Waters) at dusk one October evening. On both occasions, we were the last walkers and, thinking that the available checkpointers would have long moved on, were delighted to see a thoughtful and considerate Nick there.'

'Nick's smiling face, willingness to help and cheerful outlook will be missed by us all.'

Nick leaves daughter Sheila, son Alan, four grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Sheila said: 'Dad faced his illness with such determination and he was so positive and courageous right to the very end.'

Nick's funeral was held on August 10 and was attended by several Kent LDWA members. Nick's family say that anyone wishing to make donations in his memory to Martlets Hospice, Brighton, would be very welcome to do so.

Bob Field

GROUP members will be sad to learn of the death of Bob Field, who lived in Sittingbourne and was a Kent LDWA member for more than 20 years. Bob (membership number 17927) died on August 13. He had had a long battle with Parkinson's Disease although the cause of his death is believed to have been a urinary tract infection. Bob had turned 65 on July 16.

Bob was a very good walker who completed scores of LDWA challenge events and was a familiar face on our social walks. He particularly enjoyed our summer and winter walks in France. Bob was also a very efficient and reliable checkpointeer who regularly marshalled on Kent LDWA events. He was able to help marshal on our Cinque Ports 100 in 2018, despite the early onset of Parkinson's.



Bob taking the numbers at the Marsh Green CP on the 2014 Wealdon Waters

Bob loved sport, particularly football and cricket. He was a great supporter of Gillingham FC and of Kent County Cricket Club, and used to love the annual Kent LDWA trips to see T20 games at Canterbury. He was also a keen runner, and was a member of Sittingbourne Striders. Another of Bob's great loves was rock music and he enjoyed going to scores of concerts over the years.

In his professional life, Bob had been a structural engineer who worked for a consultants' practice in Canterbury before he retired.

Former group chairman Graham Smith said:

'Bob was a very nice guy who we could always rely on to marshal on Kent challenge events. He was also a strong walker and I would say his favourite group walks were our annual trips across the Channel in France. In fact, he was a pioneer of these walks, going on the early ones when we were developing the route.'

'One of my main memories of Bob is when I presented him with a certificate and badge at the end of my 40 mile Four Pits Walk (an Anytime Challenge which links the former mines of Chislet, Betteshanger, Tilmanstone and Snowdown) a few years ago. Bob had really struggled over the last few miles because of bad blisters, but he ignored the intense pain in his feet to finish – never were that certificate and badge better earned.'

'Bob was taken too soon and he will be missed so much.'

Shirley Gill adds: 'Just to say how very sad I am about dear Bob Field. I loved checkpointing with him – he was quietly top-notch 100% clued-in as to what was needed to run an efficient checkpoint. If things were a bit frantic, he quickly saw what required prioritising and just stepped in and sorted it out. Always with a smile.'

Bob's funeral, held at Bobbing Crematorium on September 21, was attended by several Kent Group members. Our condolences go to Bob's family at this time.

John Goodwin

KENT members will be sad to learn of the death of former group member John Goodwin. John, who had lived in Dover for most of his life before he and wife Lin moved to Lordswood, in Medway, died from cancer on October 2. He was 66.

John helped inspire our Cinque Ports 100 in 2018. In 2003 and 2005, as Deputy Mayor of Dover, he organised two charity walks visiting all the Cinque Ports of Sandwich, Dover, Hythe, New Romney and Hastings over three days. Both walks were a great success, raising thousands of pounds for local charities.

Our former chairman Graham Smith took part in both walks, subsequently putting on a 100k Cinque Ports Challenge for the group. It proved popular, as some people found it a good training walk for the LDWA Hundred. Graham put the walk on three more times and when, in 2013, we offered to host the LDWA's flagship event, a Cinque Ports 100 seemed the natural and logical choice of route. By the time the event took place, John had moved from Dover to Lordswood, but he and Lin still came down to marshal, helping out with baggage at the Duke of York's Royal Military School in Dover, which was event HQ.

John was a very keen walker who was an LDWA member for a few years. He particularly enjoyed walking long distance trails and completed several of them, including the Great Glen Way and the Hadrian's Wall Path. Two years ago, John and Lin walked from Tonbridge to Rochester to raise money for a diabetes charity.

John was a Dover councillor for more than 12 years, during which time he was elected Deputy Town Mayor. He worked for 43 years as a rail ticket clerk, first at



John Goodwin at Dover Priory railway station, where he worked for more than 30 years

Sandwich – where he was born – then at Deal and Canterbury, before working at Dover Priory for more than 30 years until his retirement in 2016.

John and Lin had been together for nine years, getting married in August last year and then going for a holiday in Scotland. John has two daughters, Becky and Rachel, both in their 30s, and four grandchildren.

John's funeral was held on November 7. Our thoughts go out to John's family at this time.

Admiral The Lord Boyce

THERE is more sad news to report with the death of Admiral the Lord Michael Boyce – who, as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, started our Cinque Ports 100 in 2018.

Admiral the Lord Boyce, who had been First Sea Lord and Chief of the Defence Staff, died on November 6 after a battle with cancer. He was 79.

On May 26 2018 he started off our Cinque Ports 100 at a ceremony at Sussex Coast College in Hastings, giving a rousing speech to the walkers. With Kent LDWA President Brian Buttifant and the then Mayor of Hastings, Cllr Nigel Sinden, he then led the walkers for the first 100 yards along Hastings seafront.

The Cinque Ports 100 – the LDWA's flagship event – visited all the Cinque Ports of Hastings, New Romney, Hythe, Dover and Sandwich and the associated towns of Winchelsea, Rye, Tenterden, Lydd and Deal. A total of 447 walkers started the event, with 309 finishing and 138 retiring.



Admiral the Lord Boyce addresses walkers at Sussex Coast College, Hastings, at the start of the Cinque Ports 100. With him is Kent LDWA Life President Brian Buttifant.

Bryan Clarke

KENT LDWA has lost one of its unsung heroes with the death of Bryan Clarke. Bryan, who was 89 and had not been in the best of health for a few years, died in hospital on November 4 after a hip replacement operation, following a fall.

For a good two decades Bryan, who was a printer by trade, produced all the paperwork for scores of Kent challenge walks, including those for the Invicta 100 in 1992 and the Millennium 100 in 2000. During this time he also produced and printed the Kent LDWA newsletter, as well as all the various forms and associated paperwork for the group's AGM and the annual Christmas lunch.



Bryan, son Keith and granddaughter Becca by the UK's lowest trig point in 2016

He served on the Kent LDWA committee for several years, and Life President Brian Buttifant – a close personal friend – says it was Bryan who brought the group into the era of computers. Bryan was an invaluable volunteer on checkpoints, turning out on all group events until restricted by ill health in recent years.

Bryan (LDWA no 3357), joined the LDWA in the early 1980s and regularly went on social walks and various challenge events, including the Gatliff Marathon and the Rottingdean Windmill Walk. He encouraged son Keith to join the LDWA while in his senior school years and completed several 25 and 30 mile challenge events with him. Later on he ran the Darent Strollers walkers' group for many years with his good friend and fellow Kent LDWA member Trevor Blake.

Sciatica and other health issues restricted Bryan's walking in recent times, but in 2016 he achieved a personal ambition when he walked to the lowest trig point in the UK – which is situated near the hamlet of Little Ouse in Cambridgeshire and is one metre below sea level – with Keith and granddaughter Becca, Keith's daughter.

Recalls Keith: 'He was 83 and made the 500 metres from the car to the trig point and then back another 500m. He had to stop a few times. Becca and I thought we might have to carry him or get a rescue vehicle at one point. He was really determined to make it to the lowest trig point, so he was very motivated despite the pain on the

day. Although his mobility didn't improve much after that, the sciatica did get a bit better after he had a back operation to release the trapped nerve.'

Bryan was born in Dartford and spent nearly all his life there. He inherited his father's print business, AD Clarke Printers and Bookbinders, based in Dartford. Daughter Helen said: 'Dad was in the print business all his life, apart from a few years' National Service, when he was in the RAF and was sent to Malta where, since he could type from his printing experience, he was involved in communications. Then he went back into the printing business. Although the business was sold up when he was in his 70s I don't think he ever truly retired. He was still dealing with publishing various newsletters until recent years.'

Bryan and wife Pat – who died in 2012 and was also an active LDWA member, helping out on checkpoint duty at all group events – were married for more than 50 years. They moved from Dartford to nearby Sutton-at-Hone 30 years ago, 20 years before Pat's death. They had three children – Helen, who lives in West Kingsdown; Keith, who lives near Cambridge; and Rob, who lives in Manchester. There are five grandchildren.

Many Kent LDWA members attended Bryan's funeral and memorial service, held at his local church at Sutton-at-Hone, on November 25.

Brian Buttifant said: 'It was a great sadness to learn of Bryan Clarke's death, a good friend going back to the early '80s. He was a great help to me with the Sevenoaks Circular, taking it from the hand-written age to the computer age, where we used a programme set up by his son Keith and implemented by Bryan to speed things along. He and Pat made a helpful team which extended to all Kent group events and a number of 100 mile events. As Bryan was a printer by trade, the group benefited from the production of our newsletter. Bryan was a regular at our pub night and end of month lunches. His interest extended right to the end and help and advice was always forthcoming. He was a lovely man who will be greatly missed.'



Bryan (far left) and Pat (third from left) with Kent colleagues on the group's checkpoint during the Wessex 100 in 2009

The group extends sincere condolences to Helen, Keith, Rob and their families.

NORTH WALES COAST PATH – JUNE 2019

From Andrew Melling

Starting out

I wasn't ready for serious hill walking and I wanted to walk by water so the Wales Coast Path seemed ideal. I hadn't visited north west Wales for some while so I fixed on parts 3 and 4, from Bangor to Cardigan. There is a good train service to Bangor from Euston with a twelve mile walk to Caernarfon on my first day. But where to camp? The one suitable site near the town was unresponsive and I had to assume it was closed. So I got the bus to Caernarfon giving me space for a long pub lunch and a 4 mile stroll past Saron to camp at Tyn Rhos.



At least that gave me time for a good look at St Baglan's Church across the fields. The church is long disused but it hosts the remains of the Earl Snowdon, once married to the Princess Margaret. Soon after, the quiet lane I had been following left the waterside to skirt the mouth of Afon Gwyrfai, following an unimpressive route to reach an equally unimpressive campsite with few signs of life.

The next day had more road walking. After 2.5 miles, I reached the coast for a mere 1.5 miles to Dinas Dinlle before heading inland again. I took the optional detour to the 'picturesque village of Llandwrog with its grand Victorian St Twrog's church and friendly local pub, the Harp Inn'. The church was

mildly interesting in having its pews facing across the nave; it was too early to try the pub but I was told later that it had been closed for two years; and let's just say that I have a different notion of what is picturesque.

A potential 7 mile slog along the A499 was relieved first by a detour above a rocky shore around Trwyn Maen Dylan to rejoin and cross the main road at Aberdesach. Quiet lanes climbed a little into the hills, to descend gently back to the main road at Clynnog. Here I found a filling station with a well-stocked shop to buy what I needed for lunch and dinner. (I passed very few stores on this trip and relied heavily on shops at filling stations.) The church at Clynnog is 16thC but on the site of a 7thC church built by St Beuno. The adjacent well in his name is reputed to have sprung up on the site of a healing miracle by the saint. After a good look round the church, I found a suitable gravestone on which to sit and eat my lunch.

North Lleyn

It wasn't far to my second night's camp, Aberafon at Gyrn Goch. This was an enormous site spread over rolling fields above the sea with steps down to a rocky beach. The one drawback was that it had only one shower block which was at the other end of the site from my pitch. It was a dry stop but very windy and a folding camper near me was rattling away all night. A hedge gave my little tent all the shelter needed.

Day 3 started with another mile along the A499 but then I was down to Trefor harbour and round the rocky headland of Morfa with its friendly oystercatchers. ('Morfa' means sea – or salt – marsh and crops up in names all along the route.) Twists and turns brought me to a lane rising steeply to Bwlch ('pass') yr Eifl, through a gate on to the open hillside. From here I had great views back to Trefor Harbour and the coast. Eschewing the detour to the summit of Yr Eifl (564m), I continued to enjoy the views, now ahead of me, while dropping gently to a car park on something like a plateau. There was nothing gentle about the descent, or plunge, down the road from here to the popular heritage centre and café at the bottom.



I shared my lunch break with a wedding reception before moving on south along the beach to some decayed winding gear then up, sometimes steeply, while blue sky enhanced the coastal views. After rounding Penrhyn Glas, another mile of gentle grass track brought me to a second St Beuno's church in isolation at Pistyll, part of an ancient pilgrims' route to Bardsey Island. Past the church, the map shows a hotel but all that is left of it are castellated gate pillars. For a while, I followed tracks at the side of large houses, across fields and by old quarries, with views of my next day's walk in the distance, before reaching the outskirts of Nefyn. Soon I had to desert the coast for some tedious road walking, latterly on suburban pavements, seeming longer than it was, to reach Twnti campsite at Morfa Nefyn. On top of the site fee of £23, I had to pay £1 for a shower! Its one redeeming feature was the pub next door.

I was glad to leave there and start Sunday (not living up to its name) with a breezy circuit of the golf course on the peninsula of Porth Dinllaen above the famous beach-side Ty Coch Inn. There was sometimes little space between the golf course and descent to the waves but at least it was a true coast path, fenced at times and often rounding stream mouths, or descending to cross. I enjoyed this all morning, especially the delightful cove of Porth Towin. In the afternoon it was time for Sunday sport – of the weatherman! After donning and doffing my rain gear two or three times I had to accept that the rain had come to stay. My next camp was inland and I had to navigate uncertain field paths, drips from the brim of my hat threatening the paper map extract I was using.

In fact, I found Trefgraig Isaf with hardly more difficulty than it took me to rouse the owner. There were no other tents on site and no sign of life from the few caravans. I thankfully pitched near a small shower block with kitchen, equipped with sink and fridge. I could charge my phone, dry my clothes (or at least make them less wet), and prepare and eat my meals in shelter. In the morning it was still raining. I could not rouse the owner to settle up so dealt with that from home by email. He said that when I arrived I had looked like a drowned rat.

I did not quite retrace my steps to the coast path but got there well enough and was more or less dry by lunchtime. The day became dry but dull, the coast path twisting beside fenced fields with frequent way-marked kissing gates and the occasional sandy cove or rocky inlet. I descended to a rather larger cove named Whistling Sands to follow the alternative route along the beach. With a nearby carpark, it was a popular spot. The official route crossed the access road at the far end so I was soon back on the cliffs. I followed the gently undulating cliff path for about two hours until I came to the deep rocky inlet of Porth Llanllawen, descending to a fine footbridge where I had lunch, sat on a grassy bank. Ascending steeply, I was soon on the open hillside of Mynydd Mawr with white-topped waymark posts to follow.

South Lleyn

I was now at the western-most point of the Lleyn – something of a milestone. I resisted the temptation to scramble down to St Mary's Well but carried on through kissing gates and past National Trust signs until I had a view of Aberdaron in the distance. After

barely two miles I was at my campsite, Dwyros, above the tiny village. Having checked in, I left my pack and strolled down into Aberdaron for supplies and a pint. It was a fine night, a far cry from the previous night's rain.

After Aberdaron, the path left the coast for a mile or so picking its way through fields where the fencing seemed to have changed since the guidebook was written. The next 2.5 miles were straightforward with lovely sea views on my right but then I turned away from the cliffs too soon and thoroughly confused myself. Giving up the attempt to retrieve the coast path, I followed the road through Rhiw down to Plas yn Rhiw with the consolation of lunch in the National Trust café. From here, the official route goes inland but the alternative along Hell's Mouth beach is half the distance and there is no sign of the dodgy cliff clay and high tides hinted at.

My next camp was Garreg Haul on the Mynydd Gilan headland. The directions to it were designed for motorists so I had arranged with the owner that I would phone him when I had climbed from the beach and he would direct me. This worked well. I had a wonderful view with a field to myself and sole use of a well-kept shower and toilet. In the morning, I just headed south west across the open headland and was easily back on the coast path. Here the path, though broad, was often between fenced fields of gorse and bracken. Undulating but not steep, it was a pleasant six miles down into Abersoch for lunch. There were two pubs: one sold real ale but no food; the other, food but no ale. The beers were from Cheshire, as were most of the people I met. There was a deli opposite the first pub and I was able to eat my own food with my pints on their terrace.

Leaving Abersoch past a most attractive inlet, I was soon on another beach. After a pleasant but unremarkable mile or so, I climbed a lane on the flank of Mynydd Tir-y-cwmwd, eventually reaching Bolmynydd campsite above Llanbedrog. The village was not the ample source of supplies I had expected and I was nearly out the other side before I came to the usual filling station store. Returning to camp a different way, I found a decent supermarket on the main road. I would have gone there first had I read the notices on the office door! The site was well looked after with hedging and a picnic table for more comfortable dining.

That day had been 16 miles but the next was 13 and the following day, just nine. My plan was to have more time at the Camping and Caravanning Club Site at Llanystumdwy, do some laundry, buy some gas in the site shop and perhaps have dinner in the pub. I set off along the beach, enjoying the colourful display of beach huts, but then having to climb above the shore to follow an enclosed footpath leading on to a sandy track beside a golf course and behind gardens, and eventually in to the centre of Pwllheli. I did not find it attractive. I remembered a family holiday on the Llyn in 1976 when Pwllheli was rechristened 'pathetic'! It was good to get out of the town and back on to a beach which I walked on or beside for nearly five miles.

My left foot was beginning to trouble me and I did not enjoy the next two miles on a cycleway alongside the busy A497. On reaching the campsite, I found that the shop was not operating because of staff shortages, there was no shop in the village and the pub opened at weekends, if the landlord felt so inclined. (The village is known for being the birth and burial place of the early twentieth-century Prime Minister David Lloyd George.) I hobbled 1.5 miles to Criccieth to a filling station store and was fortunate to get a bus back. I did my washing before dinner, but without as much drying time as I had planned. Other campers had noticed my infirmity and one man offered to drive me to my next stop if I still had a problem in the morning. Thankfully, a combination of rest and ibuprofen cured me leaving only the slight worry of whether my gas would hold out. (I had left home with only one spare canister, thinking there would be many stockists along the way.)

Back to a beach was about two miles, much of which was beside the Afon Dwyfor as it wandered lazily towards the sea. First though, there was a waymark on the post of a field gate which was firmly padlocked. I went to the right of it but there was no way through so I backtracked and climbed the gate. After another mile, Criccieth Castle came in to view and I was through the town (too early for lunch). A pleasant path beside a coastal railway brought me onto lanes around Craig Ddu, soon with amazing views of the largest beach on the route, Black Rock Sands. (Linguists will know that 'Craig Ddu' means Black Rock.) The Sands is not a quiet place, the western part being largely car park on fine days. The dunes backed up to the balconies of holiday homes and a lane between them led to a pub conveniently placed for an early lunch.

After lunch, I returned to the beach to scramble over a rocky headland to the quieter cove of Morfa Bychan. Zig-zagging along the cliffs and down to the beach path, I reached the pretty village of Borth-y-Gest. (If that name seems familiar, you may be a lawyer: it is the title taken by John Morris as a Law Lord from 1960 to 1975.) Soon Porthmadog harbour was in sight and then I was in the town on a fruitless search for a stockist of gas cylinders. Tyddyn Llwyn Campsite was about half a mile uphill from the high street. It had a well-stocked shop but their gas cylinders would have doubled the weight of my pack (sort of). Although large and commercial, the site was so dispersed over rolling ground that it did not feel crowded.

West coast

Crossing the estuary next morning, I shared the bridge with the Ffestiniog Railway, and a road. Leaving the busy A road, the route follows a complex sequence of twists and turns, lanes and field paths above Portmeirion Italianate village before returning to the road at Minfford. Saving a mile of busy road was worth this two mile detour but there was another mile of busy road to follow. More road, but quiet, shadowed the railway on a new bridge across Afon Dwyryd with mud flats on the right and sheep pasture on the left. Of the next three miles, half was along a seemingly never-ending embankment redeemed by expansive views over the estuary. Eventually, the path returned to the side of the estuary with standout views across to Portmeirion, with Snowdon in the background.

I was gaining on two walkers, some distance apart. On catching up with the hindmost, I learnt that they were together but she was suffering from sore feet. They were walking the coast path on successive Saturdays, today's stretch being from Porthmadoc to

Harlech. After joining them as far as the station, for their return home, I climbed up to Harlech town centre and castle expecting to find a pub for lunch but they had all ceased trading. I was luckier with my continued search for gas, in a sort of gift shop/hardware store. I found a nice enough lunch before descending to rejoin the path, initially beside the Royal St David's golf club, then through dunes on to Harlech beach. After a mile, I was crossing and re-crossing the railway line and following a rocky stream towards Llanbedr Station, leaving the coast path to reach and pass through the village centre to the Mill Camping and Caravan Site. Having set up, I returned to the village centre which offered something I had not experienced since Caernarfon: two shops and three pubs! Back at the site I had been joined by a large group of mountain bikers. There was no one else on the site: fortunately, as there were only two showers.

Sunday started fine. The first part of the route led me on to Shell Island and through a large, rambling, informal campsite where units, mainly campervans, were dispersed amongst the dunes. The coast path turned this way and that but the unpromising instructions in the guide book duly led me on to another enormous beach. Fine views back across to Llyn relieved 2.5 featureless miles and the red and white striped pole was a very necessary marker for the exit. Half a mile along a quite lane, I turned on to a series of field paths, stiles and gates, struggling to match the instructions to what was before me. I should turn left along Afon Ysgethin but signs directed me to the right and across a new bridge. I gave up on the guide book and followed the signs, with some guesswork, to cross a sequence of interconnected caravan sites and finally over an unsigned stone stile in to a farm yard. Looking back I saw a coast path waymark helping walkers headed north. The new bridge had saved me a loop crossing the railway line up to the main road and back crossing the line again.

More fields, gates, stiles and caravans, and a railway crossing (but more or less in a straight line, for a change), brought me to the A496 and 2.5 miles of road walking. A steep descent to Barmouth Promenade was followed by 1.4 miles of dross before the harbour. (Have you been to Barmouth? I was there in 1989 and recall this end of the town being no better then.) There used to be some nice pubs facing the harbour but they had become cafes and bistros. I found a proper pub round the corner for lunch before crossing the Mawddach Estuary on the footbridge alongside the railway. This is a toll bridge but paying someone to collect tolls long since became uneconomic, to be replaced by an honesty box. Crossing the railway again, but not for the last time, I followed a raised path beside the saltmarsh, then alongside the steam railway into Fairbourne and my next camp. It was well after three and the nearby shop, I checked, closed at 4. After finding my pitch, I went to buy for my dinner. While I was in the shop, it started to rain, in a repeat of the first Sunday. I pitched before the rain got too bad but I was unable to benefit from the picnic table which the site manager had kindly lugged across the field. It rained for the rest of the day.

It was hardly raining at all in the morning so I did use the picnic table for breakfast and while packing up. The route went straight up the hill which I could avoid with a 2 mile road walk but I resisted the temptation. The climb was a slog and the faint depiction of a path on the map was matched by a vague, and not always accurate, route description. Once out of the wood (literally!), I was on a good track descending gently for 2.3 miles over the open hillside. The weather had improved to 'pleasant' so the slog had been worthwhile. I reached Llwyngwrl at the bottom too soon for lunch so it was straight up the next hill. Leaving the lane, there was only half a mile of farmland to cross but there were problems. The guide said 'The paths are generally unclear on the ground ... so ... pay close attention to the ... description.' If only the description had given correspondingly greater detail! Eventually, I came to the next lane and found the point where I should have joined it.

For the next 2 miles, the instructions were clearer and, with two stiles replaced by gates and a ford bridged, even crossing the numerous field boundaries was a pleasure. The paths gave way to a track and then a lane to the A493. An untypically detailed description led me over the next 550 yards to a quiet lane which, nevertheless, had the wide entrance to some commercial enterprise. For want of anything better, I hung my pack on one of the automatic gates for a brief, standing, lunch break. There is a footpath over the hill which the Explorer Map marks as the coast path but I stuck to the coast, and my guide, even though it meant 1.5 miles along the quiet road to Tonfanau. Soon I was on a track and crossing the graceful arch of the new footbridge. Inland was the tidal lagoon of Broad Water and the path seemed to be a favourite of birdwatchers, as well as dog-walkers.

Journey's end

I was almost in Tywyn and my last stop of the trip: Vaenol Caravan Park on the far side of the town. I was the only tent but it was a quiet site with a facilities block more splendid than any I have seen outside France. Between my two nights here, I enjoyed a trip on the Talylyn Railway for a short post-prandial walk around Foel Cae'rberllan at Abergynolwyn. To get back to the coast path on my last morning I had to work my way through a modern housing estate to another vast sandy beach. I was walking into a fresh breeze. With my hat brim pulled well down to keep the sand out of my face, I kept wandering off the firm sand on to the difficult soft sand, making the four miles in to Aberdyfi less pleasant than it should have been. It seems my progress had been followed by two guys I shared the terrace with at lunch.

My train to Birmingham was at 15.32. Aberdyfi has two stations, neither of them in the centre of town, and I was advised to go to the one to the east, little more than an unmanned halt. I had a seat reserved in coach D but the train only had two coaches. No matter, said the guard: the system was down so reservations could not be processed anyway. Instead of a quiet coach, I had the company of a noisy group of local girls who, at least, could translate for me the announced reason for the train remaining stationary for an hour. (A train ahead was in trouble.) Would I make my connection at Birmingham? No, because the train went no further than Wolverhampton. However, I did not have to wait there long for a Euston train and was only three hours late home.

Note: I used the Official Guide, needing two of the seven volumes. They incorporate Ordnance Survey Landranger mapping, which is not good enough. I took photocopy extracts from the Explorer sheets. The guides were quite new but already out of date in some details.

POSTCARD FROM SCOTLAND: A CAIRNGORMS ADVENTURE

From Graham Smith

WHEN I write a Postcard From Scotland for the Kent LDWA Newsletter, the subject is usually something which brings back nice, happy memories, like completing one of Scotland's Great Trails, climbing some of the marvellous hills up here or just recounting some of my walks with my new LDWA group, North of Scotland. This Postcard From Scotland is quite different, because it is about the toughest walk I have ever done – two walks actually. The whole experience was some adventure and one from which I learned a big lesson. So, are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin ...



Graham climbing Ben Macdui

In June I arranged a couple of days walking in the Cairngorm mountains with my good friend 'Pendle' Pete Smith, who comes from Pendle in Lancashire (hence his nickname) and who Kent LDWA members may know from the various articles he has written for Strider over the last couple of years. We met at the camp site at Coylumbridge, just outside Aviemore, me getting the train down from my home in Tain and Pete driving up from Pendle. The plan was to walk 15 miles of the Lairig Ghru – a spectacular 27 mile mountain pass going through the Cairngorms to link Aviemore with Braemar and which reaches 2740 feet at its highest point, the Pools of Dee. We would then spend two days hillwalking before retracing our steps to Coylumbridge. So we backpacked those 15 miles in from Coylumbridge, finding a nice spot not far from the Corrou Bothy to pitch our tents. So far so good.

The following day, our plan was to ascend Ben Macdui, which is the second highest mountain in Britain (behind Ben Nevis) at 4295ft. We would then go on to Cairn Gorm (another 'super'

Munro – Munros higher than 4,000ft – at 4081ft) and do a round walk to finish back at the tents.

So we started the ascent of Ben Macdui, which was steep but steady. But once we got on the summit plateau, we found ourselves in cloud, which I told Pete I felt would burn off – oh dear, how wrong could I be! The cloud got more dense, and it was then accompanied by rain – not heavy, but persistent. We got to Ben Macdui's trig point, when I fell on an unsteady slab of rock, badly bashing my hip and cutting my hand. We then tried to navigate across to Cairn Gorm on a compass bearing. Visibility was down to just a few yards and we spent a good 90 minutes floundering about – and somehow ended up back at the trig point. By now we were very cold and very wet, and I was all for ringing Cairngorms Mountain Rescue.

By extreme good fortune, a lovely lady called Vicky suddenly appeared, having walked to Ben Macdui via Cairn Gorm from the car park at the ski centre near the top of the mountain. It transpired that Vicky, who lives in the West London area of Twickenham and makes regular visits to Scotland, knew the area and the paths pretty well. She was happy for Pete and I to walk with her to the ski centre (by now we had obviously abandoned our original plan of a round walk, and we just wanted to get off the mountain). Vicky took us on a route which bypassed Cairn Gorm before descending, and we eventually reached the ski centre at 5pm. Pete and I had been out for eight hours.

Our problem then was how to get back to the tents, so from the ski centre we took a bus to Coylumbridge (the last one – and Vicky even paid for our fares, as the driver was anxious to get off and Pete and I were having trouble getting money out of our rucksacks as our hands were still wet and cold). We went into Aviemore to have something to eat and drink before deciding on what to do next. We felt the only option was to walk through the night up the Lairig Ghru again.

So we set off, and progress was fine until it got dark. The Lairig Ghru can be difficult at the best of times, as you have to negotiate lots of uneven rocks and the path is often very faint – and at night, progress was very slow. I didn't have a torch with



Pete and Graham on Ben Macdui

me (well, I didn't think I would have to use one when we started our walk) but Pete had his, so he was able to help me negotiate the more difficult bits. We were also walking into rain and wind, making the rocks slippery and progress even harder. Just before the Pools of Dee I slipped on a wet slab of rock and had another fall, this time badly bashing my knee.

We pressed laboriously on, eventually getting back to our tents at about 2am (when it was starting to get light) and struggled into our tents pretty cold and wet – but relieved that we had (a) got off the mountain, and (b) managed to get back to our tents in the dark. We got some sleep, and in the morning we decamped to the Corrou Bothy, which was a few hundred yards from where our tents were pitched, so we could get our wet stuff dry. The sun came out in the late morning and Pete went out for a hill walk in the afternoon. The big bruises on my hip and knee were still painful from my two falls, so I didn't join him, instead just relaxing at the bothy in the sunshine.

Clearly, our experience could have been a whole lot worse, so we had been very lucky. And we had learned a big lesson. On the ascent of Ben Macdui, we should have turned back once we walked into the cloud, and done an alternative, lower level, walk. As the great Alfred Wainwright once wrote, better a postponement than a post mortem.

And 'Pendle' Pete and I will always be very grateful to Vicky from Twickenham – who came to the rescue of two granddads who should have known better than to get lost on the second highest mountain in Great Britain.

TEAM KENT'S HIGHLAND ADVENTURES

From Graham Smith

IN early July five Kent LDWA friends – Clare Evans, Nicola Foad, Ros Humphreys, Eve Richards and Cathy Waters – paid a visit to the north of Scotland, where I have now lived for two years.

It gave me great pleasure to plan a varied week of walks for them – and even greater pleasure to meet them and walk the walks with them. I live in Tain and the five flew up to Inverness from Gatwick, renting a car and then staying at a holiday cottage in Alness, which is about 13 miles from my home.

It was actually not the best of summers up here. It was generally pretty wet, and on various occasions I postponed planned hill walks because of the rain and wind. On one occasion in June, Alan Young – a guy I have met here and with whom I have enjoyed several walks – and I abandoned a hill walk in Strathconnon a couple of hours after setting off, because we encountered fierce, dangerous winds as we approached the summit of our first hill. And the heatwave, which I gather at times made walking conditions almost unbearable throughout England, certainly did not reach the north of Scotland. When England hit that record temperature of 40 degrees in July, the record was also reached in Scotland – 32 degrees. Up here in the north of Scotland it reached 27 degrees, which was hot enough.

So I was a little concerned about the weather prospects before my Kent friends arrived, but as it turned out, they brought the sunshine with them. We only had rain on one day, and then it was light and intermittent. It was a lovely week, and so good to see some Kent LDWA friends again. What follows is a day-by-day diary of our Highland adventures ...

Tuesday July 25 – To The Lighthouse

In lovely sunshine, we did my 17.5 mile To The Lighthouse walk, starting from the village of Inver and taking the coastal path to Tarbat Ness, a wonderful spot at the tip of a peninsula, with sweeping views across Dornoch Firth. At Tarbat Ness, where there is a working lighthouse (hence the name of the walk – no, it's nothing to do with a book of that name by Virginia Woolf!), the route then switches direction from north-west to south-east as we followed the coast on the other side of the peninsula, with more sweeping views, this time across Moray Firth. We then left the coast to take a path bringing us to a minor road, which we followed for a couple of miles back to Inver. I have led this walk for North of Scotland LDWA, and led a shorter version of it for Inverness Ramblers. It's low level and not too demanding, and I felt it would be ideal for a first walk for my Kent friends.

Wednesday July 26 – Ben Wyvis

I felt my Kent friends would like to say they had been up a Munro (Scottish mountains of at least 3,000 feet), and Ben Wyvis is the closest one to Tain (it's actually on the other side of Dingwall and about a 45 minute drive from my home). There is no such thing as an easy Munro, but this is one of the most straightforward of all 282 of them. It's 3423ft (no 85 on the Munro list in terms of height, so it's one of the bigger ones) and after a pleasant walk through woodland, the ascent is on a zig-zag path which is not too steep, albeit a bit laborious. Eve chose not to come as she said she didn't really fancy climbing a Munro, so there were five of us.



At Tarbat Ness



Summit of Ben Wyvis

As we approached Ben Wyvis, it was a bit cloudy, with some light rain, so we were a little apprehensive. We decided to go for it, and we were all very glad we did. The rain and cloud were a bit intermittent, but the clouds kept lifting to reveal magnificent views. We had plenty of stops on that zig-zag path before reaching the sub-top of An Cabar, and then we enjoyed a quite wonderful 1.6 km march along a broad ridge to the summit, with fantastic views all around. On the summit trig point we ate our lunches in some nice sunshine. We returned the way we had come, starting with that fabulous broad ridge. Ben Wyvis has to be one of my favourite Munros (it's a shame all the 281 others are not that straightforward).

Thursday July 27 – Struie/Struie Hill

This was a half day where I took Team Kent to my favourite local hills. Struie and Struie Hill are only a few miles from Tain, and although they are both only about 1300 feet high, they offer fine views up and down Dornoch Firth, and they are

connected by an absolutely delightful ridge. There is, initially, a short sharp climb to Struie and its summit cairn but then it's a high level march. The sun was shining for us, and afterwards we all went back to my home in Tain for a late lunch in the garden.

Friday July 28 – Suilven

This was the big one. At 2398ft, Suilven is not even a Corbett (Scottish hills of 2,500ft–2,999ft), let alone a Munro, but it's a classic, extremely shapely, mountain over on the west. I felt my Kent friends would enjoy a trip to the west, where the landscape is totally different to the east and the scenery is quite magnificent. Sadly, Ros was nursing a shin injury, so she stayed in Alness.

Once again, the sun was out. In fact, we had the best weather of the week. Going up Suilven involves an initial 5–6 mile walk-in from the parking area, which is situated just beyond Lochinver and which is very pleasant. There is then a very steep climb up to the saddle of the mountain. The climb must be one of the steepest



On Strui, with Cal



View from the top of Suilven

in Scotland, certainly steeper than those on many Munros I have been up. But we just took it steady, with plenty of stops, and eventually reached the saddle. Here Eve and Cathy decided to stop, so they waited in the sunshine while Clare, Nicola and I went on to the summit, which involves some minor scrambling and a couple of exposed ridges. I have to say that I was so impressed with Clare, who tackled the scrambling and ridges like a mountain goat. At the top, the views were fantastic.

We went back the same way to meet Eve and Cathy (en route meeting a couple of guys up in Scotland on holiday and – hopefully! – we encouraged them to join the LDWA), and then that steep descent. At the bottom, Eve, Clare and I had a refreshing swim in a lochan, before the walk back to the car. The entire walk ended up 12.25 miles, with 3278ft of ascent – more than a Munro. It was a demanding day in which Team Kent really did the old county proud.

Saturday July 29 – John O'Groats Trail: Tain–Golspie

This is a 22 mile stretch of the John O'Groats Trail, a 147 mile long distance path which starts in Inverness, and was mainly created – by an American called Jay Wilson – to prevent walkers going from Land's End to John O'Groats from using the busy and dangerous A9.

This particular stretch of the trail has a lot of variety, crossing the bridge over Dornoch Firth to reach the town of Dornoch. Yet again, we had good weather. At Dornoch we walked on the beach for a couple of miles to Embo, where the trail heads inland to Loch Fleet, which is one of my favourite places since moving up here and where you can see scores of seals if the tide is out. Sadly, the tide was in, but we still saw a few seals bobbing in the water while we had our lunch. There is then a wooded section on a former railway line, then a short stretch beside the A9 before heading down into woods and fields, where we were lucky enough to

see two pairs of osprey.

We then went into the very pleasant Balblair Wood to reach the coast again, where we followed the beach to Golspie. Eve and Clare had a swim in the sea before we all caught the train for Tain (that phrase has a certain twang!), where we went to my home for fish and chips. (That day was actually a recce, because a week later I led the same walk for North of Scotland LDWA, on a day which was pretty dreich – a very descriptive word basically meaning dull and wet).

Sunday July 30 – Knockfarrel and Cnoc Mor

The last day, and an easy one, which I reckon we all needed after the big walks of the previous two days. On yet another gloriously sunny day, we went to Strathpeffer, a lovely little spa town just beyond Dingwall, from where we climbed the hill of Knockfarrel and then descended and re-ascended to take a ridge to Cnoc Mor. Knockfarrel is only 623 feet but it's a delightful hill, with fine views across to Ben Wyvis. As we were sitting there having our lunch, we had the fantastic bonus of seeing an eagle circling several hundred feet above us.



On Knockfarrel

The ridge to Cnoc Mor, where there is a trig point hidden by trees and which Nicola climbed onto, is brilliant. The walk was 4.75 miles, with about 1,000 feet of ascent. It was a very nice way to end Team Kent's Highlands adventure.

It was a lovely week, and we couldn't have asked for better weather.

Haste ye back.

LANDS OF THE GREAT AND GODS

From Peter Jull

WITH the Tour de France in the Pyrenees during a week I couldn't get away, last year's Covid scuppered plans for Andorra couldn't be resurrected. It also wasn't the year for Hungary/Ukraine border plans thanks to Putin's bellicosity so the only bucket list item left was North Macedonia; so an itinerary was planned around Wizz Air's anti-social 1:30am landing time in Skopje.

Day 1 – An inauspicious start

That Luton leaving time was delayed by 90 minutes wasn't too inconvenient as I'd planned to hang around what was Alexander the Great Airport until that name was changed to assuage Greek objections, until first light. So a relatively short drive north to Vaksince at the foot of the mountains where a dozen or more loose dogs chased and barked after the car – disconcerting. Out the other side of the village the AA-directed route deteriorated from road to track and far too soon became more than my little hire car could cope with, so parked on grass and started walking. After 20 minutes of steep and rocky track things eased off and became more car friendly if I could have gotten it this far. Another hour to reach where I'd intended to park and then the hamlet of Shtraze, described



as abandoned in some sources but at least some of the dozen houses showed signs of recent activity although were deserted as I passed through. Here endeth the useful tracks marked on Garmin maps so I'd printed a screenshot from Google Earth which showed many more. Except I've picked up the one for this afternoon. Memory and guesswork don't work too well but eventually try an overgrown track through trees which surely didn't show on satellites but soon reached the open with a big hill ahead and a more visible track in roughly the right direction. But it later veered away so turned right onto an even less visible path which in turn petered out into bushwhacking terrain. The target Kosovo/Serbia/Macedonia border tripoint was near on the GPS screen but the direction arrow seemed inconsistent. Fire blackened stumps of trees resembled weird creatures, a rampant rabbit is recalled, but brambles had colonised the ground, snagging at ankles and hiding rocks and crumbling branches to trip on. Energy sapping and time consuming efforts to get the arrow to show closer to the target gave way to concern that the GPS

might not help me find Shtraze again. Turning downhill in as straight a line as can be kept through the vegetation does find a track which does lead back to the hamlet which has a memorial fountain with pipe spouting water into a trough. Drink my fill and refill and set off down the up track. There are still butterflies everywhere: yellow, orange, blue, black & white, wings of many colours, hundreds in places, thousands overall.

The GPS had faithfully followed the track on its map uphill but now it's showing me in featureless terrain when I'm definitely on a

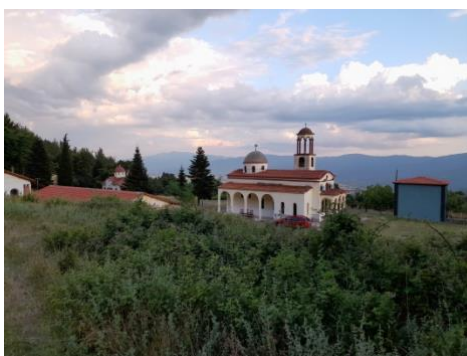
track. After its vagaries up the mountain I convince myself it's wrong and this is the track I remember from before. Freely drink the water judging to leave a last good swig for when the car is reached. Except it doesn't appear and then the edge of the village is reached. Convinced I recognise the way I drove, play the sleuth and follow the only tyre tracks that must be mine because I've seen no person or vehicle anywhere all day. They lead back up and up and I try some side tracks but see nothing that resembles where I parked. I was meant to be off the mountain by lunchtime, have no torch, no water, no wallet even. And I'm an hour from the village again with an hour 'til sunset and even though I can get to the village I'll be penniless in a strange place until I can find the car. Prudence makes me 'phone the police. Befuddled by the sun, the heat, the exhaustion, the dehydration after 14 hours which was planned to be 4, my mispronunciation and mis-remembrance of the village and hamlet names causes confusion as to which mountains I'm in so they ask me to knock on the first door I come to so a local can clarify where I am. That happens to be the village shop and in the shop happens to be a man who speaks English who speaks to the police who agree to come. With the sun clouded over and my thinking unclouded I had by now worked out where I'd gone astray and with the water the shop had given me could have got back to the car before dark. But the police were coming now so the polite thing to do was wait... and wait. The two who eventually arrived spoke only Albanian so the shopkeeper's nephew translated while they spoke endlessly to HQ on their phones. It seems a law had come into force that morning forbidding people going into these mountains because of the high temperatures and resultant fire risk. They needed permission from a senior to go into the mountains themselves and take me to find the car. By now completely dark, eventually they and I and the nephew got in their police car which was no bigger or better able to cope with the rough track than mine had been, worse in fact with four on board. They soon happened upon a farmer on his tractor which they commandeered and bade me stand precariously on the back with the farmer while one took the wheel and I tried to direct. After considerable bouncing and clinging, headlights reflected on my car. Back to the shop at police directions. Although they still had my passport, HQ seemed to want to confirm that I wasn't a Syrian refugee with whom they had had problems, sneaking through the mountains towards Germany and starting fires. That involved me repeating English phrases to an officer on the phone whose English was poorer than those spoken to previously and who thought sheep was proper speak. My bona fides satisfied, passport returned and paperwork signed, after 3-4 hours waiting for and with the police I was free to go. If you thought my tribulations for day 1 were over – read on.



The hotel I was booked into was some 2 hours drive to other mountains in the north-east corner of the country. All went smoothly to within ¼ mile and the last right turn I was looking for. In the dark a sign was hard to read, the only clear part referencing a church, so decided to carry straight on for a bit more. The tarmac became a dirt road which, after a storm, was muddy. In many attempts to go back the wheels just spun in the mud, then sideways into a ditch. By now the hotel reception closing time had passed so I ended up sleeping in the car.

Day 2

Awoke at first light, long before the hotel reception was due to open. Started out for the Bulgaria/Serbia/Macedonia tripoint with the right Google Earth screen shot this time but only some cherry tomatoes slightly liquid-like. A ridge ahead was readily conquered to reveal another ridge ahead over which was revealed another ridge that might be the Bulgarian border and that my reserve waterproof socks which were all I could find without more unpacking were not so waterproof in long grass wet from the storm. Sun position, compass direction and GPS were not correlating with planned tracks appearing on the screen shot and it became apparent that the car position was not where I thought I had started from. So abandon target 2, back to the car, back to the turning with the sign which in the daylight can be seen as where I want to go and leads to the hotel. Booking.com says this hotel speaks English but should read has a young girl that knows how to use Google Translate on her phone. My predicament understood, she offers to find help and coffee which I'm sure I declined. But a cup arrives and for anyone who knows my view of coffee the most tortuous part of the trip was drinking it out of politeness while avoiding the thick stodge at the bottom. Within the hour a local farmer & tractor & friend appeared, got the car out of the ditch somewhat dented by the tree against which it came to rest, refused payment, and I could drive back to the hotel. The breakfast I'd ordered, however, took 2½ hours to arrive which was a plate of fried eggs & bacon with cucumber and tomato, nice, and one of a watery noodle soup which was not worth the delay.



Driving up the road in the dark had involved dodging and brushing aside lots of overhanging branches. AA route finder knew where the hotel was but not the road to it so I had thought this was its usual condition. But driving away a couple of dozen men (I hadn't seen that many houses in the valley) with their own chain saws, loppers & axes were having a spontaneous community clear up of the storm damage impeding their road, including my two rescuers. After the late breakfast, a long drive, a wrong turn, a safety layby snooze and a detour to the next hotel so the 9pm last check-in didn't become a restricting factor, by the time I arrived at Makrinitza across the border in Greece I only had a few hours to climb up to the Bulgaria/Greece/Macedonia tripoint instead of a long afternoon. The not-on-Streetview road out of the village turned out to be good tarmac with plentiful parking opportunities so use time now to save some later by going back to get the car and driving to where the tarmac ends

beside a pair of churches. So it's 5:30 before I set off up a track, easy at first but soon becoming rough and steep enough to require frequent breather/heart rate reduction pauses. Eventually eases to allow more continuous progress then meets a wider, leveller forestry track right where the Garmin map and GPS say it should be. The map detail in Greece and Bulgaria appears more complete than in former Yugoslav areas. Follow the track in the planned direction then round a corner a rare gap in the trees reveals a great lump of a mountain yet to climb that there's no way I have enough time for even though I am now prepared with a torch. Abandon target 3 out 3 to save energy for tomorrow. Back in the village the local's taverna is a pleasant spot to eat and while away an hour watching village life.

Day 3

At last back on schedule and the first fresh underpants for 3 days (*too much information!* – ed). Drive south to Mount Olympus and turning off the motorway into the national park the road is tarmac in reasonable condition until nearly at the car park a stretch is broken up and potholed, one of which is banged as a car comes the other way. The car park is half full when I get there and checking what the pothole might have done finds a flat tyre. In the boot there's no spare wheel, only a puncture repair kit.

Rationalising that if it works it might be flat again by the time I get back and it's before 8am so there's no one to call if it doesn't. It does mean that I can't now stay up the mountain until dark if needed but set off anyway. The path is managed, with the usual log step risers and manoeuvred rocks and even handrails in places. My first overtakers are 2 runners and an 11 year old as it gets steeper and steeper. The route is almost entirely wooded and views limited to more trees. The mule train supplying the refuge bellrings its way down. After some 4 hours that refuge is glimpsed between trees and then there's a small glacier to cross and then I'm there.

Accommodation & café available. A sign says altitude 2100m. The top is 2900m (9570ft) and the car park start was 1100m. Had my time been unrestricted I would have gone on but even if I reached the walk up secondary peak the last bit to the highest point is apparently a scramble which I may not have been brave enough to attempt anyway. A secondary peak doesn't really count as a high point so back down again. Zeus and target 4 out of 4 missed. Family groups with primary age children and barely any kit pass by.



At the car park take a closer look at the repair kit – no instructions. Ask maybe 10 people if they know what to do before someone seems to have an idea. But the holes are too big so it doesn't work. The now open adjacent café agrees to call a local (20 miles away) breakdown firm €130. An hour later a rattley old truck arrives and the Greek-only speaking driver winches the car on the back. Driving down the winding mountain road he's on the phone a lot but at least it transpires that he called a mate who runs a tyre place who when we get there seems to have turned out just to fit a new tyre for me. Serendipitously the tyre place is across the road from the hotel I'd booked.

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Day 4

Long drive back into North Macedonia to the shores of Lake Prespa. The last 5 miles is as expected a first gear all the way gravel track to the tiny settlement of Konjsko, census population 3 (in which case I saw them all) although there were at least a dozen houses all of which seemed in use. On arrival the first person I see speaks English and has a boat in which he can take me to Snake Island for 2400 dinars (~£35). The only island in North Macedonia, the boat trip round and to it passes the



Albania/Greece/Macedonia tripoint so at last a target to count as completed. Pelicans skim low across the water and nearer in cormorants and gulls scatter frenziedly from the boat. At the landing beach 7 other boats are already here from the larger more accessible village, 5 miles back from where I'd started. The island only gets perhaps 100 visitors per year but today there are a group of 50. In an hour on the island which is only 700yds x 500yds I don't see a single one though. In the small church no one from England has signed the visitor's book in the two years I looked back. On the noisy 'bird' side of the island the trees are white with guano. But not a single snake seen. Back to the boat. Back to the shore. Back along the first-gear-all-the-way track to Stenje where the other boats are starting to land.

Lunch in the beachfront taverna while pondering what to do next. I'd allowed

lots of time for trying to find a boat and now had a whole afternoon to spare. On Google Earth I'd spotted a location called 'two lakes viewpoint'. Following the mountain road to Lake Ohrid where the next hotel is, the pass tops out at a layby occupied by French & Germans. The Masrovo National Park map and route signs don't mention two lakes view but it looks probably right. Not far up a marked path I can indeed see both lakes. After losing views passing through a gully a peak comes into sight, higher than what could be seen from the road, and marked with a post. At a time expending pace on a steep but easy path that peak was reached after 90 minutes. Even the



sign had said only 1 hour so not a self-respecting LDWA pace. There are two higher peaks further on but I suspect they might each obstruct the view from the other. On a hazy afternoon the view is not spectacular. 6100ft will do (the layby was 5000ft); 40 minutes back down, it was too easy to be slower. Onto Ohrid city which is a lakeside honeypot for laze-about type tourists with a UNESCO old town and where I'd feared a Brit or two might be encountered but no.

Day 5

Head north and find the turning I need. From Streetview of the main road it looked tarmac, and for the first ½ mile it was but became a dirt track much more rutted than the day before and definitely 1st gear all the way. 4 miles of this and a policeman steps out from under a tree and calls a halt. He says they're discouraging people from going into the mountains because of the high temperatures (32°C) and fire risk but after I explain I'm not camping and have no means of starting a fire he's content for me to continue. 6 more miles of bumps to reach the planned parking spot and find 2 more policemen. They are border police and with translation help from a man fishing in the river explain I don't want to cross the border which is for local Kosovans and



Macedonians only but park here and hike in the Macedonian mountains. One seems amenable but the other is emphatically 'Ne' and I have to turn around. I'm half way back before there's another point to cross that river and attempt to approach the Albania/Kosovo/Macedonia tripoint from further back. After a while to figure out that from where I'd parked the path on the map started from behind some beehives, it was a could-have-been-in-England grassy track through trees out into an open valley. The track became fainter and then non-existent in a marshy area where the map path crossed a river. With GPS help a lengthy search identified what was probably the intended crossing point but there was too much water in the river today without resorting to shoes and socks off. Try to pick up an alternative path and soon find where there is a more obvious crossing point of a tributary but again there is too much water and width to cross. That stropky copper has properly thwarted my attempt at target 6. Dawdle

back to the car soaking in the expansive scenery which no photograph can do justice to. It's butterfly world again with an orange and black variety predominant. Only 7 miles to the hotel takes well over an hour given the state of the road, one rut of which catches the front spoiler and pushes it back too close to the wheel. The hotel receptionist helpfully calls for help and a man with a crowbar appears and makes it better.

Day 6

First light and back up that bumpy road, even more carefully this time, to the Strezimir police post but no policemen this time. Several tents and associated campers stirring at 6:45. The route begins as a track but soon a clear finger post points up a steep but easy woodland path with red/white marks painted on rocks and trees. The track rejoins and out in the open there are also tall yellow and black poles to mark the way when there is deep snow. A dilapidated farmhouse & barn come into view halfway to the top of a mountain valley. By the time this is passed and a col at the top of the valley reached, the campers have caught up. Turning along the ridge, still steeply up, a higher mountain than seen from the valley comes into view, perhaps this is Korab. The path turns away, then towards it, then away again to reveal another valley which the path traverses the head of, largely level. Another mountain, higher still, comes into view, perhaps this is Korab. With the clear path GPS is not in use as I embrace the revelation of each new vista. Campers start coming down so can't be far and others seen coming from a different way, Albania. The path works its way round to reach the top from the far side of that originally seen. A proper 'walk up' mountain with no scary airy precipices or scrambling and much more grass and dirt than steppy rocks to reach 9068ft and the highest point in North Macedonia and Albania. 4300ft gross ascent from the start but total higher because the path descended in places. 12 Czechs accumulate while I'm at the top and I get to be their group photographer. A short lunch and back down. A large flock of sheep with shepherds and dogs in tow with scary looking spiked collars converge on the path and we become entangled briefly. A thunder storm seen far ahead comes close enough to hurty hail on me for a while. That's about as eventful as a 'went according to plan' day should be.





Day 7

Time only to hang around the capital Skopje waiting for the flight home in debilitating heat (36°C) suitable only for sitting in the shade and reflecting that my walking achievements had not been great or godlike. There must be more statues per head of population here than anywhere else, celebrating anyone from conquerors to communists. Lunch in the old bazaar where it's 1pm on a Friday and prayer mats appear around the 3 mosques with men kneeling while girls in short shorts squeeze past and I and others drink beer in an adjacent café. The last thing to do is tell the hire company what I've done to their car...

Back at Luton disembarkation from the delayed flight is delayed because they can't find anybody to push the steps up to the plane. Summer 2022!

ROGER'S LONG WALK

From Roger Wedderburn-Day

I have been a member of the LDWA for around two years. I joined when I was planning my first extended walk, the North Down's Way, which I completed in the Summer of 2021. I chose this one because I live in Kent and the walk goes right past my house, guaranteeing me at least one night of luxurious accommodation.

This summer (2022), I walked the Pennine Way. Both these walks were by way of preparation for 2023's walk, and valuable lessons were learned on each of them. For example I had extensive blisters on my first walk due to (I later discovered) poor shoe selection and failing to let my feet breathe periodically. On the Pennine Way I didn't have a single blister. I also used my son's old DoE backpack which almost came apart on me on the last day. On the Pennine Way, I discovered the importance of walking poles when I found my knees getting increasingly painful with multiple days ahead of me until I could reach the nearest shop that sold them.

Before I joined the LDWA, my longest walk had been a four day jaunt with a couple of mates around the Isle of Wight in our university holidays. The highlight (certainly in retrospect if not at the time) was being woken in a campsite in the early morning by the sound of a couple enjoying themselves a little too much and, after some time, hearing a little child's voice asking his parents what the noise was!

In 2023, in part to celebrate turning 60, I propose to walk round England, in the main using the English Coastal Path where it exists or is planned. I intend to start on Saturday 1 April 2023 (and no, this is not an early April Fool's wind-up) and to end on or before 30 September. I will be starting in Gravesend where I will take the ferry to Tilbury and walk anti-clockwise. I will be walking too many LDPs (in whole or part) to mention them all, but the highlights include the Norfolk Coast Path, the Cleveland Way, the Northumberland Coast Path, a chunk of St Cuthbert's Way coupled with some Pennine Way and Hadrian's Wall to cover the North, Offa's Dyke to cover the Welsh Border and the South West Coast Path.

The full route comes out at very close to 2,500 miles on the Ordnance Survey app and I plan to walk a minimum of 15 miles a day. If I only achieve the minimum, it will take me around 166 days, leaving 17 rest days or about one free day after every 10 walking.

One thing I already know, though, is to expect the unexpected. Inevitably some paths I think will be public will turn out not to be, others may be closed or too overgrown to tackle, and I will likely miss my way or be forced to take detours (particularly where there is no signal or my phone battery has died)!

I plan to stay wherever I can find accommodation, be it camping, hosteling, B&B, pub or hotel. As I will be funding all the costs myself, the preferred options will be the cheaper ones!

As it is going to be a long and, at times I suspect, lonely walk, I welcome company. Anyone reading this is more than welcome to join me for any part of the walk – I have set up a Facebook page called 'Roger's Long Walk' and you can message me through that if you are interested. The page will contain details of my progress and I hope to update it regularly once I start walking.

Wish me luck!

GROUP/SOCIAL WALKS

From Peter Jull – Alliteration Q, May 2022

OR how to confound a maths teacher by fitting 5 quarters into a whole walk. The awakening bells of St. Mildred's clanging, encouraged 15 to walk away from Tenterden as soon as possible. Looping south, Tenterden Quarter was the only one with a sign confirming the name on the map existed on the ground. Dodging youngsters practicing cricket then into countryside before clipping another tendril of Tenterden then later another, an hour had gone before the town was fully left behind. Another hour and High



Halden's green was reached with its shady oak and surrounding benches welcome for elevenses on a warm and sunny morning. Further north and a field at Middle Quarter had the cutest Shetland foal keen to nibble at a hand. Further still, despite some dodgy paths, and Further Quarter, meant the walk was 3 quarters done and not yet midday. Onto Smarden and the Flying Horse's beer festival was boisterous enough to add 200 yards round the corner to the quieter Chequers. A loop north to Smarden Quarter to speculate whether Lewd Lane referenced the nature of this quarter in the past. Oh look, we're back in Smarden again, then out again across a farm with the biggest yellowest waymarks possible. Haffenden Quarter was the fifth quarter with nought left to do but find the way back. That way crossed a field of bovinophobia but all the youngsters wanted to do was join the walk and lick an outstretched hand. After 20 miles St. Mildred's tower embellishes a grand view of the last stretch and welcomingly signals the end is nigh.

10 Q & A – NEIL HIGHAM

1. When did you join the LDWA?

Waaay, waaay, back – 1979/1980, when I were but a young lad in short trousers I had the good fortune / privilege of meeting both of the inspirational LDWA Founders, Alan Blatchford – tragically taken so young – and Chris Steer.

2. How did you hear about the organisation?

I honestly cannot now recall; however, having just left University, I had joined the Backpackers Club, only to find that I wasn't really cut out for / enjoy this pastime – highly probable that (wild) solo camping off the Cornwall coast in 1979, in the week of the infamous Fastnet race (15 sailors lost, many yachts sunk), greatly contributed to this decision! Why stay awake all night, I mused, grimly hanging onto one's tent and belongings, when one could just as easily, and perhaps more safely, be out walking from dusk to dawn!!

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

I cannot now be certain, but the first Challenge Walk was likely to have been early 1980 and probably the Winter Tanners or the Punchbowl – perhaps even the Sevenoaks Circular. The Surrey Summits followed, propelling me to start the 1980 South Downs Hundred (dropped out at 40 odd miles). Memories are, perhaps understandably, a little fuzzy.

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

Whilst the Hundred has always had a certain allure for me, I think – in fact, I know – that those days are well behind me now. In 'ye olden times' there was a certain prestige in completing the 'classic' 62½ mile (ie 100K) events, which basically just took out one full day of the weekend. Nowadays, 100K events are rarely seen, with 50 milers to the fore; 50 miles is still a 'good' distance to aim for, whatever the month or the weather. My first 50 miler was a Tanners 50 held in July (1980) – it involved a 9 mile cycle, primarily downhill, to Leatherhead for the 04:00 start, 20 mile 'lap' done, then joining the 'sane' ones for the last 30 miles up and down those Surrey hills. Finished in daylight, then cycled and walked back home, felt more like 90 miles – and all uphill; them were the days. My last* was the Roundhay 50 just before the pandemic hit in 2020 (**though I also completed 51 miles on the 'virtual' 100 last year*). Given a prevailing wind and generous time limits (or, perhaps better, no time limit!), I feel that 50 miles is still just within my capabilities.

5. What is your favourite (non-Kent) walking area?

I think that this would have to be the White Peak, which is where my formative/teenage years were spent; as a family, my parents would drive us the 7 miles to Dovedale, but only *after* all the tourists had gone home for the day / weekend, as it was a lot less crowded then. Having said that, and if you look hard enough, the diversity and sheer beauty of the British countryside can be seen in every county. Surrey is, perhaps surprisingly, the most densely wooded county in England and is anything but flat – surely just an extension of London?! – as I had mistakenly assumed prior to moving here; many LDWA events (Winter Tanners, Punchbowl, Surrey Summits (of old), etc) have fully disabused me of that notion.

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

'Obvs' the finish of each of my 13 Hundred completions must rank in the high spots, with the low points being my 5 failures for various reasons – or 6 if one includes the 2021 'virtual' 100. I cannot speak for others, but completing a Hundred means that I feel 'invincible' / 'on top of the world' / 'able to cope with almost anything'.

There are so many memories of the Hundreds, they never go away – and whilst I cannot remember every step that I have taken, I am still able to recall many details of each. A few memories follow:

One was the 1998 White Peak Hundred, second day, at about 13:00. I had succumbed to the allure of an ice-cream at 11am, but Keith Warman (my 'go to' man for the Hundreds, a 'guaranteed' finisher) had gone on ahead. Shirlie, Keith's partner, had walked Keith into the Calton Checkpoint, and had then come back ½ mile or so to accompany me (to the CP). We had walked a couple of hundred yards when Shirlie started waving vigorously at an elderly couple at the top of the field – and they waved back equally enthusiastically. '*Someone you know, Shirlie?*' I politely enquired (in retrospect, a bit of a stupid question, but hey ho, I had just walked 70 miles). Back came the reply – '*Yes, Neil – it's your parents!*' Oh. My. Goodness – cue frantic waving from son.

Another is from the 1987 Snowdonia Hundred, when I unexpectedly finished just before dark on Day 2 – I haven't always been a slowcoach! – and then had to 'run' around Llanwrst looking for a working telephone (no mobiles back then!), so that I could cadge a lift back to my accommodation. This was also the event where I can still distinctly recall a certain Tony Cartwright (Surrey Group) arriving at the outdoor Cwm Bychan Checkpoint, 70.4 miles done, at the foot of the Roman Steps, and gleefully and loudly proclaiming to all and sundry '*Just a Tanners left to walk!*'; perhaps luckily for Tony, no-one had the energy to bop him one on the nose

The 1997 South Downs Hundred (Marshals) was my 10th completion, and came less than a month after the birth of our daughter; I had been doing all the night feeds, so I guess that I should have been reasonably geared up for no sleep but boy, was I tired throughout that walk.

Leaving aside the incessant heavy rain on the 1981 Cumbrian Hundred (my first success), possibly my worst time on a Hundred was my last completion – Northumberland 2006 – near the end of the second night, 85 miles done; the Route Description said '*at 1st road junction TR. Follow road uphill for approx 1 mile to 7-bar gate*'. Well, I was completely on me toad at this stage and it felt as if I had been plodding slowly up that blessed (minor) road 'forever', as the grey daylight slowly dawned. I kept looking back, full of doubt and thinking 'did I take the wrong turning? Did I do a TL instead of a TR?' Eventually – and thankfully – said gate came into view, so I was still *en route*, phew; I would have very happily retired there and then, but it would be some time before I even saw anybody else so not an option. A further memory from this time, albeit only from afterwards, was that had I known that there were only a couple of people behind me on leaving the Breakfast stop – Rothbury – I would have retired; I believed at the time that there were perhaps 20 or 30 still behind me! As it was, I was the last finisher (someone has to be!) – to rousing applause – in 47 hours 40 minutes and still had the wherewithal to politely point out to the organisers that my Certificate inadvertently showed 49 hours, which would of course have been a non-completion.

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

Those who have sauntered through two nights on a Hundred will invariably have had hallucinations, so this does tend to skew one's perceptions. I well recall meeting (I was a mere Marshal) and then walking in with Brigitte Lansky at dusk on Day 2, after some 99 miles of the 1992 Invicta Hundred, as she vividly described the wedding dresses and similar accoutrements which she could clearly see – I nodded along in reality, of course, it was just the light descending from the street lamps on a footpath in the southern outskirts of Sevenoaks – but I could see where she was coming from.

8. What does your partner/family think of the LDWA?

Both partners made it abundantly clear early on that overnight events were a bridge – or a stile, maybe? – too far. The first wife completed an Oxon 20 whilst the second possibly holds a unique place in LDWA history – she may be the first lady, perhaps the first person and potentially even the only person to date to have completed her *first* 30 miler the day *after* getting engaged (to me, actually); mind you, it was the (1995) Sevenoaks Circular Marshals Walk, so we couldn't really escape from doing this – questions would have been asked!

9. What do you think is the best thing about the LDWA?

The camaraderie – and seeing familiar faces at different events; I have found that, over 40+ years and almost without exception, it is 'easy' to talk to other LDWA members – after all, we have a common interest or two. And, despite any rumours to the contrary, I'm really not all fussed who I walk with.

I have met literally hundreds of wonderful members who have willingly given some of their precious time to help out with organising and manning of events and with the LDWA generally – long may this continue.

Equally is the wonderful opportunity afforded to us all to walk in and explore new areas of the British countryside, following challenging routes devised by fellow walkers.

And I think that the LDWA has endured over its 50 years – at its basic, I believe that it is still recognisable as the same organisation as it was when I joined. Put bluntly, if it's a 30 mile route, then that means it is 30 miles that one has to do under one's own steam, no matter how many 'gizmos', eg GPS, that one has.

10. What does the LDWA mean to you?

Well, as I suspect you can probably guess by now, having been a member for some 43 years, the LDWA looms very large in my life. Initially, and like most 'newbies', I was fully enthusiastic about completing events, with occasional checkpointing – my first experience of this was on the inaugural Sussex Group event, the 1981 Seven Sisters Marathon, having done the Marshals Walk courtesy of a Sussex Group member, Paul Gaston, who lived nearby and very kindly provided transport (I still had no 'wheels'). I joined the Kent Group Committee at the end of 1996, as Treasurer, and remained *in situ* until January 2018, combining this with organising the High Weald Walk for over a decade, as well as being Treasurer for the Millennium and Cinque Ports Hundreds. And I still hope to checkpoint and otherwise contribute to the LDWA for the foreseeable future, though this may well be in pastures new.



'And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless Us, Every One!'
Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (1843)

Season's Greetings to all Kent LDWA members and associates