

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION – Kent Group

furthering the interests of those who enjoy long-distance walking

NEWSLETTER



Peter Jull and Andrew Gordon finishing the EBB 100



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WELCOME to the August 2023 edition of the Kent Group Newsletter. Congratulations to all entrants and helpers for their part in this year's EBB 100 Challenge! This issue contains reports on the event from the perspectives of both organisers and participants, as well as news of other walking activities in which Kent LDWA members have been involved.

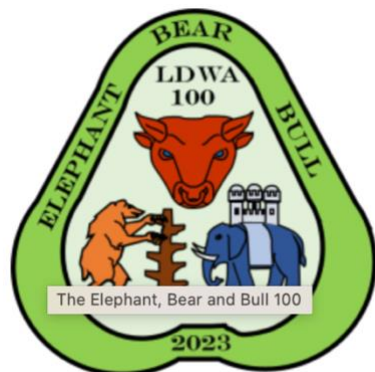
For the information of those members who have asked to receive a print copy of the newsletter, this matter was discussed at the April Committee meeting. It was decided that since there were only two, rather than the usual three, newsletters published last year, there would be no subscriptions charged for receipt of the print copy in 2023. Subscriptions for a print copy will restart in 2024, but those who have already paid for a print copy this year will be exempt from paying next year.

Cathy Waters

KENT GROUP COMMITTEE

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THE ELEPHANT, BEAR AND BULL 100



Kent LDWA had 12 entrants successfully complete this year's 100 Challenge event (* signifies a first completion):

Antony Barker, Andrew Boulden, Nicola Foad, Jill Green, Andrew Gordon, Peter Jull, Judy Rickwood, Rose-Anne Sinclair*, David Spring*, Helen Strong (Marshals'), Mike Walsh* and Keith Warman.

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

Don Arthurs, Dawn Jones and Alan Stewart.

Report from Stephanie Le Men – Warwick CP

As usual Kent was staffing a checkpoint on the annual LDWA hundred event the last weekend in May – the EBB. Getting to the checkpoint proved to be difficult for some, with very bad traffic on the M25. The trains however proved less of a hassle.

We started the evening well with a delightful curry cooked by Helen and a cheeky glass of wine brought by Andrew (see picture next page). What a good idea this was, to give us a boost for the night!



That night we had a constant flow of walkers. This was different from last year when we had a big gap between the first walker and the following ones. The arrival times seemed to be faster than last year – probably explained by nicer weather and less climbs!

It was good to see Kent members coming – for example: Andrew Boulden, with a very fast time, Nicola Foad, moved by the kindness of volunteers and other walkers, Jill Green and Jim Catchpole, chatting and laughing, Keith Warman catching up with Neil Higham, and Peter Jull, joking despite the strain of the walk – this is when I thought ‘he can do it!’

The volunteers were very busy. We had a system of shifts but some marshals elected to work both shifts. Helen, David, Ros and Clare were cooking ravioli and spaghetti hoops as fast as they could (David confided those would not appear on his dinner table any time soon!). It soon appeared that there was a craving for yogurts this year so Sophie rushed to the nearby Sainsburys and ended up buying all their stock! I wonder what the shop assistants thought of that ...

On Sunday afternoon the remaining volunteers, tired and happy, closed the hall to go home to have a rest. Penny and I took the train and were fast asleep within 5 minutes (we had each worked both shifts).

When I woke up the next day, I had a message from Sarah telling me Peter had just finished: I found the Facebook video of him and Andrew Gordon reaching the finish and I cried and laughed at the same time watching it – clearly puzzling my partner who thought the sleepless night on Saturday had taken its toll. What a way to end the weekend!

Next year’s hundred is the Speyside Hundred, in Scotland. The Kent group is not organising a checkpoint due to the distance from here. However, please contact our ex-Chairman, Graham Smith, if you would like to help since the organizing committee needs more volunteers (email n.scot.ldwa@gmail.com). The Kent group won’t refund expenses but you can discuss this topic with Graham.

From Neil Higham

On the use of trackers; or, Totally unexpected name tops Leaderboard; or, Finally, Peter shows his credentials; or, Is this a new Peter? or, Bit of a turn up for the books, n’est ce pas? or, Was he on a motorbike at the time? or, Whaaaaaaat? or, Tracking Hell.

Firstly, well done to our Chair, Peter, for completing the EBB 100, where he easily finished within the 48 hour limit, with some 49 minutes to spare. *(Taken from screen on Monday morning, 09:15 finish, with a 10:04 start – maybe Peter should confirm, his Certificate should give a clue – even his replacement replacement tracker seems not to have functioned completely correctly near the end).*

But what about the start, you may ask, how did that go?

Well, the following two screenshots (next page) – more accurately, mobile phone photos of what was showing on the screen, which is why the pictures ain’t straight, apologies – were taken by one remote viewer at 15:46, so some 5¾ hours into the event. It shows the *fastest moving* entrants overall *up to* that point in time (ie *not* the most distance travelled nor the fastest *at* that particular point in time), whether they started at 10:00 (Peter and almost all), 12:00 (some fast walkers and joggers) or 14:00 (some runners). The second name and all subsequent names on the left screen shot (ie David Wakeling downwards) are all recognised runners in LDWA events, so it was something of a surprise (for which read ‘shock’/ ‘totally gobsmacked’) to see ‘our Peter’ up there, mixing it with the elite, particularly as he had been out on the road for 4 hours *more* than Messrs Wakeling etc.

Checking on just the Kent Group members showed Andrew Boulden trailing Peter, on overall speed alone, by quite some!

#	name	speed	grp	fav
254	Peter Jull	6.1	Kent	☆
439	David Wakeling	6.0	Surrey	☆
441	Lisa Joanne Walbridge	6.0	Beds Bucks and Nthnts	☆
440	Jared Walbridge	6.0	Beds Bucks and Nthnts	☆
346	Rhys Pippard	6.0	South Wales	☆
434	Stephen Vaughan	5.7	West Yorkshire	☆
221	Nils Hofmann	5.6	Vermuyden (South Yorks)	☆
188	Michelle Harle	5.6	Vermuyden (South Yorks)	☆
237	Matt Hutchinson	5.3	North Yorkshire	☆
315	Victoria Morris	5.3	North Yorkshire	☆
70	San Buckley	5.3	South Manchester	☆
140	Sara Fabien	5.3	London	☆
14	Nigel Aston	5.2	Heart of England	☆
225	Gisela Hoppe	5.2	Wessex	☆

Furious refreshing of the screen by our remote viewer continued to show Jull P heading the Leaderboard, albeit that there was scant other information available on his progress, whereas with most of the others we could see how far they had gone and what time they had arrived at the early checkpoints.

#	name	speed	grp	fav
254	Peter Jull	6.1	Kent	☆
51	Andrew Boulden	4.0	Kent	☆
9	Don Arthurs	3.4	Kent	☆
27	Antony Barter	3.4	Kent	☆
400	David Spring	3.2	Kent	☆
390	Rose-Anne Sinclair	3.2	Kent	☆
450	Mike Walsh	3.2	Kent	☆
146	Nicola Foad	3.1	Kent	☆
176	Jill Green	3.0	Kent	☆
364	Judy Rickwood	2.9	Kent	☆
455	Keith Warman	2.7	Kent	☆
409	Alan Stewart	2.8	Kent	☆
250	Dawn Jones	2.6	Kent	☆
165	Andrew Gordon	2.6	Kent	☆

After what felt like the 218th refresh – it was nearing 16:30 by now – some new information suddenly appeared (*well, it may have been there all*

along, but this remote viewer's computer skills often leave something to be

desired) – A ha! Peter's tracker was showing that his last timing was at just 10:05, so after only 1 minute, not even 5 minutes (as the computer shows a 10:04 start time) and another refresh showed just 0.2 miles travelled, which sort of put a different complexion on matters – see below. *Even so, 0.2 miles in 1 minute is a very healthy 12 mph pace, but the early readings are notoriously prone to inaccuracy (ie until sufficient data is available) and must always be taken with 'a pinch of salt'.*

So the question for this – and very likely for many other – remote viewer(s) now became, 'Did Peter even start?', or perhaps more likely 'Has there been a tracking malfunction?'

One of the Kent checkpoint helpers called in at event HQ on the way to CP9 at Warwick (primarily to see whether any of the food and drink provisions had been missed off the 'catering' van and thus needed taking on) and ascertained from 'them that knew' (namely Ken Falconer, current LDWA Vice-President) that it was a tracking malfunction, Peter had *definitely* started, and that they had sent out a few replacement trackers, including to Peter.

C/P	Time	Speed	Dist	Elev'n
Start	10.04	-	-	148
CP 1 Northf...	-	-	6.3	167
CP 2 Rubery	-	-	10.8	223
CP 3 Alvech...	-	-	16.4	142
CP 4 Tanwor...	-	-	23.0	159
CP 5 Henley	-	-	27.7	82
CP 6 Aston	-	-	34.2	55
CP 7 Stratf...	-	-	41.0	43
CP 8 Norton	-	-	49.2	115

But, anyway, tracking malfunction or not, *Peter will no doubt be dining out on this story* – ie the screenshot – *for some decades to come*; 'look, if you don't believe me, here's the evidence!!!'

Congratulations to all who completed the event, commiserations to all who, for whatever reason, didn't quite make it, and also to those who had entered but sadly failed to reach the start line, and thank you also to the Kent Group helpers at Warwick for what was a 'fun' time.

C/P	Time	Speed	Dist	Elev'n
Start	10.04	-	-	148
CP 1 Northf...	ETA: 11.06	-	6.3	167
CP 2 Rubery	ETA: 11.50	-	10.8	223
CP 3 Alvech...	ETA: 12.45	-	16.4	142
CP 4 Tanwor...	ETA: 13.51	-	23.0	159
CP 5 Henley	ETA: 14.37	-	27.7	82
CP 6 Aston	ETA: 15.42	-	34.2	55
CP 7 Stratf...	ETA: 16.49	-	41.0	43
CP 8 Norton	ETA: 18.10	-	49.2	115

REPORTS FROM EBB 100 ENTRANTS

From David Spring – A Walk into the Unknown

I have been a member of the LDWA for a little over a year. I initially heard mention of the flagship '100 mile challenge' on my first social walk. At the time, I couldn't believe that people actually attempted this: 100 miles in 48 hours with hardly any sleep. crazy!

For a few months, the Idea developed in the back of my mind: Is it possible? Could I really manage to complete this challenge as well?

To keep my options open, I entered the White Cliffs Challenge as a qualifying event. Even this walk, at 50 miles, was a lot further than I had ever managed before, but I completed it in a reasonable time, and my body was still in good shape afterwards.



After some gentle nudging from Peter Jull, I decided to go for it and submitted my entry for the EBB 100. Thus committed and reasonably confident, my only aim was to finish the course.

In training for 'The 100', after completing a number of challenge events, my confidence took a bit of a knock when I suffered severe cramp and foot injuries. I was now seriously doubting my ability to see it through to the end of the EBB 100. It would have been almost unthinkable, however, for me not to make the attempt. So on a beautiful morning at the end of May, on the outskirts of Birmingham, I found myself standing at the starting line of the EBB 100. Many thoughts swirled around my head ... 'How Will I feel 48 hours from now?' 'Will I actually reach the finish?' 'How fast should I go?' 'Is it possible actually to enjoy the experience?' But very quickly we were away!

The first few hours felt reasonably comfortable: the weather was perfect, and I was matching the pace of people around me. We left the suburbs of Birmingham and came out into wonderful rolling countryside with expansive views, the Malvern hills on the horizon over our right shoulders.

I had decided to make full use of every checkpoint by taking my pack off and sitting down to eat and drink (only snacking but taking every opportunity to get the weight off my feet).

The perfect day transitioned into a hot and sticky one and this route was definitely not flat! The hours ticked by and I gradually felt confident enough to push the pace a little. I was joined by a young man who asked if he could walk with me. We shared the navigation and kept each other company during the first day and into the first night.

Unfortunately at Stratford Upon Avon I found him lying on the ground outside the checkpoint, feeling ill. He convinced me to go on alone.

Almost immediately I met up with a couple who had reconnoitred the night section and I tagged along with them. This definitely enabled me to travel faster in the dark. But this is when my problems started.

My stomach had started to feel uncomfortable during the evening, and now I was feeling really rough. I eventually vomited three or four times, finding it almost impossible to eat anything. It also felt like I was going to lose control of my rear end, so I was trying to work out a plan for dealing with that. Blimey... spare shorts not available until the breakfast stop!

Into the bright sunlight of the second day, my stomach pains had settled down and I decided to push on again, leaving my navigators behind.

Now I was walking alone with no one in sight. Just before the checkpoint in Warwick, I closed in slowly on a walker with the dreaded 'lean'. I was fascinated. How was he still managing to walk and at such a fast pace? He seemed to counteract the lean by pulling on the opposite side of his rucksack. That's what you call determination! Unfortunately, when he reached the checkpoint, he promptly fell into a bush and called out 'I think I should retire here!'

The breakfast stop came and went, only a banana for me but no need for the spare shorts! Now I was starting to feel really confident, spending less time at the checkpoints and was pretty sure I was going to make it.

The sting in the tail proved to be the amount of time spent walking along canal towpaths – absolute mental torture – no one else around, no boats passing, no views – just peering into the distance, longing for that part to end!

At the final checkpoint, I was straight in and out again. And now jogging on anything remotely downhill.

As the finish line came into sight, I felt a real sense of satisfaction. I love a challenge, and this had certainly been an extreme physical challenge. Would I do it again? I am not sure!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the team that organised this event and the many marshals who manned the checkpoints: a job very well done.

From Nicola Foad

A change of heart and a trial amendment to the rules on qualifying to enter the LDWA 100 mile challenge event resulted in my entry to the Elephant, Bear and Bull (EBB) 100. After the Hadrian's 100 in 2019 I said, and believed, that was my last 100. Recovery had taken so long that I wondered if I was unwell and needed to go to the doctors. Thankfully an equilibrium came back without intervention and I was out enjoying our social walks and my holiday walking trips.

I admired those who had the determination and strength to do a virtual 100 but had no desire myself to walk in the conditions that were introduced. In any event I was not going to do another 100.

When the Trans-Pennine 100 was announced, and with the memory of going over Cross Fell on the Hadrian's 100 etched on my mind, I thought that I would like to do the TP 100, but in four or five social walks and enjoy the scenery. There was no reason for me to choose a qualifying walk in 2021, and in 2022 I enjoyed the Oxon 40 and was content with the challenge it presented. I walk for the sheer enjoyment and the sense of well-being it brings to me. I enjoy walking with others and love hearing about other walking tales. I don't have to chase distance or speed targets.

When I read that a qualifying event for the EBB could include a completed 100 back to Hadrian's 100, I wondered if I could try my luck again! I hadn't walked anywhere on the EBB route which went through some historic landmarks. I decided not to think too much and just go ahead and enter.

In the months and weeks leading up to the EBB, going out on the social walks with my Kent group friends and walking with Cathy and Sarah on part of the GR70 Stevenson Way helped me build my walking fitness. Kind messages of support helped assuage the butterflies.

Staying in Central Birmingham allowed me to travel by bus to the start of the EBB at Mosely. It took less than an hour and I arrived before registration was open. It was an opportunity to apply adhesive dressings on the soles of my feet and put plasters around all my toes. Time well spent and which helped prevent the degree of blistering I have experienced on other 100s.

Handing in my breakfast bag and leaving my travel bag was a speedy process and so was registration. It was good to see Isobel Falconer who I walked with on the Cinque Ports 100 and fellow Kent member Wendy Thurrell. They had both walked on the marshals' EBB when the conditions were much less favourable, to put it mildly. I had never walked with or even seen a tracker device before and was pleasantly surprised how snugly it fitted in the top pocket of my rucksack. We were offered a plentiful supply of toast and hot drinks and not having eaten breakfast I tucked in. Alan Stewart and Judy Rickwood sat at the table. All around there was excited conversation. Eventually the signal was given to move outside for the opening address and send off. The sun was shining and the weather was forecast to be dry and sunny. Ideal.

Northfield Fire Station was the first checkpoint after 6.3 miles. I was ready for a drink and to eat. The route description guided us well through the suburbs. From the toposcope on the top of Windmill Hill I admired the views across the countryside and learned that virtual clip points did not require any clipping, but were recorded via the tracker.

Fortunately it was still light when I passed the statue of Shakespeare ahead of checkpoint 7 at Stratford Methodist Church Centre. Every checkpoint looked after and welcomed us but as night progressed, I began to look forward to checkpoint 9 at the Warwick Space Community Centre and seeing my Kent group friends. And what a welcome I received. Thank you: it perked me up to chat and see you all. It was a long period to be open and I am grateful for all your hard work.

By the time I reached the breakfast stop at Kenilworth Tennis, Squash and Croquet Club I was ready to eat and freshen up. My batteries were recharged and I felt that I had reached a significant milestone in the walk. Next stage Coventry. Walking through the city, as before (and throughout), the route description kept us on track. I know from experience how much work writing and checking a route description involves and it was to the credit of the EBB organisers that they did such a good job.

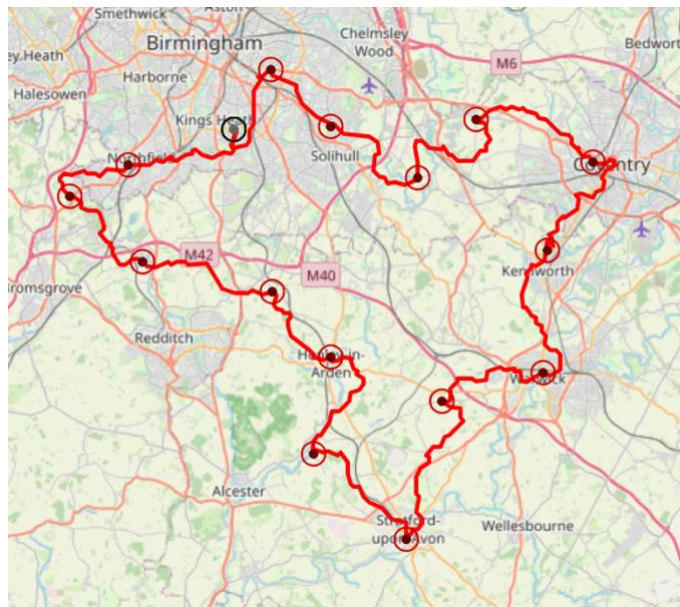
At checkpoint 13 at Barston St Swithin's House I had a mild telling off for walking with an empty drinks container. I explained that I had drunk plenty, and at every checkpoint, and all was well. That was not the case for another person who had been unwell and was wondering how they could carry on. I asked Mike, from the London group, who I had been walking with if he had any spare electrolyte tablets he could offer. Fortunately he had and when I saw the person again they looked so much better.

Between check points 14 and 15 we had our final stretch of walking along the Grand Union Canal. We had been advised not to fall in: it was shallow, but very dirty and you were at risk of a bad upset stomach if you had the misfortune to swallow any of the water. I kept my wits about me.

On the last stretch walking through Shire Country Park I heard owls call. A wonderful sound. I saw the lights standing around the rugby club and realised how close I was to the finish when suddenly without warning I fell flat hitting my head on the ground. Thankfully, there was only minor damage to the bridge of my glasses. I reached the finish with Mike to applause and the bell. I couldn't believe that I had got back so soon. After a cup of tea and chat I was asked if I would like to go to the 'snorers' hotel'. My bags were collected and taken for me. Yet another act of kindness.

I have so many happy memories of the EBB and would like everyone to know how grateful I am for all the support and work that was so generously given: the LDWA at its best.

From Peter Jull



The atmosphere of anticipation at the start of a 100 is too enticing to ignore, so wending a way through Birmingham's backstreets for a 10th start couldn't be resisted. The rugby club stand proved a useful facility although the upstairs toilets failed. Using the numbered seats to order the bags was an interesting innovation. And there was still space to sit and wait in the sunshine and the good tannoy made the announcements perfectly audible. With three others my name was called out as having non-functioning trackers. Retrieved from bag and buttons pressed and held as we walked to the start line made no difference. 10 o'clock was 5 minutes gone before the starting bell rang.

Despite the industrial reputation of Birmingham, the first miles were pleasantly green. The route around CP1 was more urban than ideal but a small boy offering squirts from his water pistol was delighted to be allowed a head shot. And then the countryside began with a climb into the Waseley Hills where David Spring caught up just as I was stopping to take a precautionary painkiller. CP2 arrived welcomingly quickly at under 11 miles, but a long time after breakfast, with a refuelling offering that excused the limited choice at CP1. Into the Lickey Hills, where Judy Rickwood overtakes, to

then be found 'resting' on the ground, woozy after hill climbing in the heat. Soon recovered, she re-overtakes.

At CP3 am accosted by the Raynet man wanting to change my tracker while all I want is a cooling head drench, and get from David Findel-Hawkins. At CP4 I'm still on the wanted list as tracker 2 isn't working either and I'm showing as not having left the start. Passed onto CP5 where they're not looking for me, but on asking I get tracker No3 and suddenly jump forward 28 miles. I've been working my way relentlessly towards the back of the field and here in Henley in Arden the locals have heard about the madmen who've gone through before and ask what's going on. At the bottom of Beaudesert Castle mound Simon Pipe and Andy Todd lie in wait with cameras ready so I know I'm going the right way.

The frequency of checkpoints is making things feel easier and it's CP6 before darkness falls. 6.7 miles to Stratford, will I be a dozy Zombie before I get there or try a snooze now? Half an hour behind the stage curtain doesn't really work, so out into the night. Get lazy as it's too easy following paths in long grass where 700+ feet have preceded me rather than the RD, until it isn't and I can't see which field in the RD I'm in. Two head lights approach from behind taking a different line across the field to me. Wander across to join them and find its Alan Stewart and Judy. They decide we're off the .gpx track and we head back across the field to join the line I was on.

As Keith Warman settles for a snooze, leave Stratford with Dawn Jones and Andy Gordon. Within a mile, I decide I should have snoozed as well and eschew a cold metal bench to lie down on a wooden lakeside angler's deck as the others went on. Don't know how long I was there, not long I think, before starting the climb out of the Avon valley. Fall in with, on and off, #444.

As I arrive at CP8 others and Andy are leaving without Dawn who is deciding on continuance. Inside there is talk of how many to come and sweepers and who will be retired as floor coverings are folded up. Dawn and new Suffolk friend set off before me. Warwick seems soon reached but then it seems a long way through Warwick before the Kent CP is reached where I'm clapped and cheered and fed a portion fitting of my physique. It seems not far before Kenilworth is reached at the castle but again it feels sadistic how much further before the CP is reached at 63 miles for baggage and breakfast. It's 3pm Sunday afternoon and even roast beef and Yorkshire pudding is off. I would have changed a chaffing shirt hours ago; now a nice medical man tapes a sore underarm.

#444 and I are together when the body wagon pulls alongside and informs us that everyone behind has been retired and he and I are now last. I remark to #444 that they seem like the Child Catcher from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* – ready for us to be their next victims. On into Coventry which highlights the excess of RD directions about where to safely cross busy roads which are very unbusy and RD loses clarity instead. Having stayed in Coventry Friday night, I'd had a wander and noted some of the expected route, but still I turned one street too soon. When RD ceased to match my position I busked it towards the road works noted on Friday to get back on route

and to the checkpoint just as the sweepers swept in #444 and to be informed that my divergence had been tracked and a search party was about to be dispatched when my correctional turn had been spotted.

Feeling good for the next leg I pull ahead of the sweepers and stay ahead and reach CP12 as night 2 begins. There are many walkers still here but most get away before I'm ready. At night it's impossible to read and walk at the same time and a bunch following gps devices catches up, rustling trousers man, 40's friends – one with sore feet – and leaning Richard. Better than Marshal's mud but three arable fields with mini ridges now rock hard are uncomfortable walking. #444 and sweepers catch up. Soon and suddenly, #444 has a visible lean and is struggling, unlike leaning Richard who has been coping well. 40's friends have a feel good patch and pull ahead. Rustler and I pull ahead of leaning Richard. At CP13 a leaving Andy informs he's getting the lean. 40's friends, Rustler and I are together again at the start of leg 14, but before the Grand Union Canal stretch I'm starting to feel a twinging in the lower back and pause to break out a pole and fall further behind as the mesmerising effects of torchlight and tiredness start demanding shut eyes. Having retired their leaners, the sweepers catch up. I'm wandering in mind and direction and stopping suddenly as I'm aware of the sweepers braking hard behind me. Eventually I spot somewhere to sit for a power nap. I come round feeling so much better which is remarkable as the sweepers tell me later it was only 3 minutes. It's now light enough to douse torches and I shoot off to CP14, arriving before the others leave.

The 4 miles of Leg 15 are almost all Grand Union Canal and I can't shake off the sweepers despite a head start as the effects of the power nap start to fade and the lean develops. At the start of the last leg I catch Andy, now with a hefty branch to support his lean, and confirm he's happy to be helped by the sweepers. But he's coping well and 40's friend without sore feet lends a pole so branch can be discarded and he keeps up and the sweepers join as we maintain our own paces – sometimes faster, sometimes slower. My phone goes: it's the walk control desk; I seem to have stopped moving. Tracker 3 has failed. I'm with the sweepers I say. This leaves Andy ahead as we turn towards the finish and as we're live videoed, his lean looks more spectacular. For the last few yards we link arms; we're leaning in opposite directions and enter the rugby club together, equal last: but ahead of all the retirees.

From Keith Warman

This year's offering (the title of which was based upon the symbols of Coventry, Warwickshire and Birmingham respectively) had its headquarters at Moseley Rugby Club, in the southern suburbs of Birmingham. From there, we followed an anti-clockwise route via the Waseley and Lickey Hills, Alvechurch, Henley-in-Arden, Stratford-upon-Avon, the Welcombe Hills, Warwick, Coventry, the Grand Union Canal and back to Moseley. There was a more 'urban' aspect than usual, but the many historical sites contrasted well with the lush and lavish countryside through which we passed.

In the hot and humid conditions, with large sections of concrete and tarmac underfoot plus rock-hard field surfaces, it was a tougher than expected challenge.

The best bits

The 'virtual' support I received from my partner Shirlie at home really spurred me on to finish. (This year was the first time since 1996 she was unable to be present to support me.)

Immediately before the start, there was a special moment – Len Fallick had been asked and was honoured to present the late Roger Cole's son and daughter with an engraved glass tumbler to commemorate Roger's 40th Hundred completion.

All checkpoints were welcoming and encouraging, goading me to press on. At Stratford-upon-Avon (41 miles), I was desperate for my customary forty winks and Staffordshire Group kindly placed an old blanket across three chairs – bliss! It was great to reach Warwick checkpoint (55 miles), to see so many familiar Kentish faces and to be warmly looked after – thank you all!

I enjoyed the company of fellow hundredeers – Len Fallick (who was on his way to a record-equalling 41st Hundred completion), good chums Angela and Tony Walton and, for the final 22 miles, the Welsh trio of Gerry Jackson, Cheryl Llewellyn and Angela Williams. I also shared short times around the route with Richard Plumley, Andrew Gordon, Jean Bowers, Richard Haynes, Judy Rickwood and Alan Stewart.

After about 74 miles, whilst strolling along a residential road through Allesley (just after Coventry), I spied a hand-written sign in a house garden. It read, 'EBB 100 – GOOD LUCK TO ALL!!' What a lovely thought. I glanced up the drive and saw a lady vigorously waving to me from her lounge window! With a big grin, I returned her wave.

It was at Meriden (78 miles and on the cusp of second night darkness) where I joined the Welsh trio – I was concerned about walking alone on the forthcoming lengthy sections of canal towpath. Their company and first-rate banter certainly lifted my flagging spirits. I relished the relative tranquillity along the wildlife corridors through the urban areas, the expansive views from the Waseley and Lickey Hills, the verdant countryside of Warwickshire and the serenity of the canal towpath sections.

I am indebted to Merrian Lancaster, a marshal at the final checkpoint at Hay Mills (95 miles). She kindly lent me a walking pole. I had been suffering from the dreaded 'leans' for a few miles (for the first time ever) and the pole certainly helped.

The superb reception we received at the end was truly magnificent.

It was quite moving to witness Peter Jull and Andrew Gordon struggle in to rousing applause, holding each other up as they reached the finishing desk.

Some not-quite-so-best bits

Near Hampton-in-Arden the route crossed two large rock-solid cropped fields, which had inhospitable ridges – their spacing was such that any traverse over them was somewhat combative. The unremitting juddering and pain which the Kentish Tortoise’s legs and feet endured are sorely remembered.

After about 90 miles, my three Welsh companions and I had a surreal moment. With the Grand Union Canal on our left, we had been walking very carefully along the bone-dry towpath for around four miles when, without warning, we were confronted by standing water and mud. The sepulchral glow from our torches couldn’t find the end of it. The alternatives raised no enthusiasm – to our right was a bank of impenetrable brambles and nettles and to our left was the option of an ‘early bath’. Collectively, we chose to waddle on through the middle – feet and footwear in shock at the first soaking on the route.

Immediately feeling very faint from the temperature in the hall at the finish, I was grateful to the two folk who promptly plonked me on a chair and brought me a drink. Prudently, they assisted me back out into the entrance lobby, which was much cooler. From there, I was able to congratulate the final few finishers and hear the announcements and applause from inside. (I recovered sufficiently to join everyone in the hall a little later.)

A heart-rending moment

In the centre of Coventry, I turned a corner and encountered the ruins of the Old Cathedral together with the adjacent 1960s New Cathedral. The route followed a walkway between the two. A noticeboard explained how an air-raid attack in World War Two practically destroyed the Old during one night in which over 500 people lost their lives. You could not fail to be touched by the poignant remains of the Old in striking contrast to the impressive, but stark, modernism of the New.

The locals were friendly!

Early on, in the Birmingham suburbs near Frankley, I met a cheerful local lad who greeted me with a hearty, ‘HULLO MATEY! ENJOY YER HOICK!’

Whilst weaving my way through crowded Coventry, I was accosted by a staggering gentleman, who was enjoying what was possibly not his first drink of the afternoon. He attempted to wag his finger in my face and our verbal exchange was along the lines of:

Man: ‘I know what you’re doing (*slurp*) – do you think you’ll finish in time?’

Me: ‘I hope so.’

Man: ‘I’ve done what you’re doing (*hic*), but instead of 48 hours, I did it in 24 hours.’

Me: ‘That’s impressive and (*wanting to keep moving*) it’s very nice meeting you.’

Man: ‘Yeah, I did Ben Nevis and Snowdon and all that stuff but, trouble was (*burp*), you only go up to come back down again (*hic*)!’

In conclusion

Congratulations and hats off to Jill Green for completing her 30th Hundred. Overall, the finishing percentage was 76%, slightly higher than the long-term average. Kent Group had 80% finishers (12 from 15 starters). Well done to all who took part.

Despite several setbacks over the past few years, the organising committee (together with marshals, helpers and friends) deserve our gratitude for all their time and effort in putting on both the marshals’ walk and the main event. My own sincere thanks go to every Kent Group member who manned our checkpoint at Warwick. I left there with a Midlands spring in my step!

A thoroughly splendid Hundred.

From Andrew Gordon and Dawn Jones

Our third attempt at a 100, the first being a successful completion of the Y Sir Fynwy Virtual challenge in 2021 along with our friend Barbara. For us that meant four slightly modified loops of the Canterbury Outer Ring. Dawn and Andy then decided to take on the Trans-Pennine 100 in 2022 but unfortunately neither of us made it to the finish. It was a tough event and trying to descend from Ladlow Rocks in the dark remains quite a scary memory! Dawn retired at CP5, Crowden, with bad blisters and Andy eventually timed out at CP8, Nam Nick, suffering from the leans.

Dawn’s EBB

Dawn didn’t have a qualifier as things stood but then came the welcome news that the LDWA were trialling a new route to entry which meant she qualified on the basis of successful completion of a 100 in the last 3 years.

Dawn’s preparation for the EBB hadn’t been all that she had wanted it to be as her busy life had to take priority. We had both finished this year’s 32 mile Sevenoaks Circular as part of our build up but we weren’t exactly worrying the leader board! Dawn was concerned about her feet as they’d been a big factor in her not finishing the Trans-Pennine 100.

Things started well and the checkpoints were all great and welcoming as we made reasonable progress. Dawn’s Gluten Free food was

waiting for her at the checkpoints without a hitch. We teamed up with up Jane Audsley from Norfolk & Suffolk to walk through the first night. We all kept each other's spirits up and it was a good session.

As we walked into the morning and reached CP8, Norton Lindsey Village Hall, Dawn made the decision that she wasn't going to complete the event. A combination of blisters, fatigue and compromised fitness meant she decided not to inflict any more damage on her body. We decided to separate at this point as Dawn wanted to spend some time tending her feet before continuing and Andy went on.

Dawn was determined to get a qualifier for the Speyside 100 so, having patched herself up, on she went to reach CP9, Warwickspace Community Centre, at 55.6 miles and her 'home' Kent checkpoint and some familiar friendly faces. Mission accomplished!

Andy's EBB

The Kent team looked after Andy at CP 9, but not before Dale and John had to hail him from the other side of the street as he was about the march merrily past.

Andy teamed up with Renee Vroom, who'd travelled from the Netherlands to take part, to walk through the second night. All seemed to be going well at this point and he thought he'd dodged the leans. At just under 10 miles to go, however, Andy felt the early signs of the leans coming on. Some messaging between Dawn and Andy ensued and it then fell to Dawn to take on the role of chief encourager! Andy and Peter Jull kept bumping into each other towards the later stages and at Checkpoint 14, 1st Solihull Scout Hall, Peter was entering as Andy was leaving. Neither of them was in great shape at this point but Peter still kindly offered Andy the use of his only walking pole! Andy's memory of this section is a little vague, but it coincided with a section of the Grand Union Canal and walking from dark into light. His left leaning had him headed toward the Canal if he should trip. As dawn started to break, Andy's pace was becoming very slow and Renee's chances of a successful finish were being compromised. With no walking pole(s) he decided to stop and find something to act as a walking staff from the woods at the edge of the canal whilst Renee went on.

At CP15, St Cyprian's Memorial Hall, Andy hid his walking staff, a semi rotten thin branch, outside before entering in case anyone should think he had lost his mind and needed to be retired. Shortly after this checkpoint, Peter passed the honour of being 'swept' by the sweepers to Andy. At about this point another backmarker, Matthew Daer, generously lent Andy his walking pole.

A relatively refreshed Dawn walked out to meet and encourage Peter and Andy at the end and warn them that the LDWA media people were about to stick a camera and microphone in their faces. After 48 hours without sleep it wasn't a prospect Andy particularly relished.

The end was close and then a tiny navigational error saw the pair separated only by 50m. A linked arm finish, facilitated by them leaning in opposite directions, seemed the right way to end as they were applauded into the HQ finish to the accompaniment of the customary bell ringing.

Andy had strict instructions not to lay on the bed after showering and fall asleep, but the next thing he knew Dawn was ringing his mobile as he'd fallen asleep sitting in the room chair and then continued to nod off periodically for the whole drive back down to Kent.

So, in preparation for the Speyside 100 Dawn has already embarked on a campaign of running and cycling to improve her endurance and fitness levels. Andy will probably be purchasing some lightweight walking poles, trying to lose some weight and maybe even signing up for some stretching, pilates and yoga classes! He and Peter were tipped off by David Morgan at the end that this may be the answer to avoiding the dreaded leans.

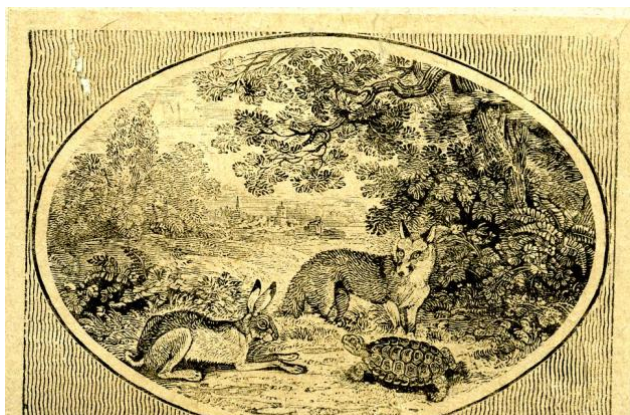
We've both booked our non-refundable accommodation at the Badaguish Outdoor Centre for the Speyside 100 2024. Now there's just slight apprehension that the event is oversubscribed and we have to enter the perils of the ballot process. Whilst we are both relative late comers to the 100 event, I think we may be slightly addicted to it!

From Shirlie Gill

EBB Hundred 2023

Mind made up – the Kentish Tortoise
Started out with steadfast purpose
Strolling round a hundred miles
Somewhere in the British Isles.

City centres, High Speed Rails
Up some hills and down some dales
Bridged canals and shady woods
Calm and tranquil neighbourhoods



Fable of The Hare and the Tortoise; illustration to the *The Fables of Æsop, and Others* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1818, p.221); after Thomas Bewick.
©British Museum

Checkpoints welcome all in sight
Cheerful greetings day and night
Marshals urge them not to stop
'Just keep walking – limp or hop'.

Through the door – they're just in time
A bell is rung – oh magic chime!
Applause and cheers from all around
The grandest ever welcome sound!

THE BEACONS WAY 15 – 21 MAY 2023

From Helen Strong

There are a few trails in the UK which require some thought before attempting to walk them. The Beacons Way, I suggest, is one of them. It's not a simple 'walk in the (national) park' – but is well known to be one of Wales's toughest trails. So, when David suggested we should do the Beacons Way – I was up for it. 'It's a 100 mile long, linear route with about 24,000 ft of ascent', he said. 'I was thinking we could go a couple of weeks after your 100 marshals walk.'

Mmmmm. That's not that far – and I should be recovered enough by then, I thought. I keenly encouraged him to plan and book. He planned we could walk it in five days – though the distance each day was determined by the accommodation available, and we would have a couple of long, tough days at the beginning of the trail for sure.



My EBB marshals walk went really well. I was physically tired for a couple of days after, and mentally tired being in the throes of completing my thesis. But a social walk the week after the marshals gave me the confidence that I was fit enough to take on this tough trail.

We headed off very early on Monday morning and drove to Wales, parking the car in Abergavenny. We then had a slightly awkward train and rail replacement bus service that seemed to take all day to reach our starting point at Llangadog. Most literature on the Beacons Way describes it running from east to west, but we prefer to walk, as many people do, in the other direction. A stay in a pub overnight allowed us to start the walk nice and early the following morning. We had about 20 miles to cover that day and an additional 2 miles off the trail to get us to the Airbnb.

The first day was stunning. As we walked out of Abergavenny, slowly and surely up the hill, the weather was perfect – it was getting warm, but there was a refreshing breeze. We were soon within the National Park which used to be called the Brecon Beacons, but recently adopted the Welsh name Bannau Brycheiniog. Mid-morning and we stopped for a break at Carreg Cennen Castle. Sat on top of a hill, this fort dates back to Roman times though the castle was built in the 13th century.

Leaving this site it was late morning and getting warmer and sunnier as we headed up to a more remote moorland area where the map suggested there were lots of shake holes and disused quarries. This part of the park is distinguishable on the OS map by being shaded yellow. The first point to make is that the route is not waymarked in any way in those shaded areas of the national park. For us, fortunately, the weather was good for the whole time we were on the trail so we could easily pick up the walked path. However, if the weather was poor, these open land areas could be difficult to navigate. Indeed, those planning this in bad weather would be wise to have 'get out' routes planned – or simply not risk getting stranded up on the moor – which is often the case with inexperienced walkers here apparently. The second point on navigation is that although we had downloaded a GPX file from the LDWA LDP page – it was not the same as the route printed on the OS map. In the main we followed the OS map markings as we had read that the route was revised in 2016, and the one on OS maps is the route which walkers are now advised to follow.

That afternoon, walking around the Foel Fawr and Foel Fraith, we could see the large and imposing lump of rock called Garreg Las ahead. It was getting late and we still had about 6 miles to go – over this hill and rather tricky granite-like boulders to climb over, those 6 miles were tough. We came down off the moorland area and headed towards the village of Llandeusant. It was a very steep walk down the road and a kindly farmer's wife – with her dogs on board the quad bike she was riding – asked us if we were going up or down (she was heading up and would have given us a ride). We got to the bottom of the road and I could see that the road back up towards the accommodation was as steep as that we had just come down... 'are you trying to kill me David?!' I said with some exasperation.

As we came to the Airbnb it was not too soon for us both. I was feeling quite exhausted, and the hosts showed us into the

accommodation. They had been somewhat concerned as to where we had got to as they knew we were walking the trail and we had suggested we would arrive by 6pm and it was now gone 7:30pm. We were tired and hungry, yet our hosts wanted to chat and it was all we could do to be polite, and hope they would see we were bushed and let us be – we just wanted to sit down with a cup of tea – and then get unpacked, repack, get showered and eat dinner! It came as no surprise that my Coros watch logged we had climbed 4751 ft that day, because it darn well felt like it.

We got up early again the next morning and left at 7am. We were walking about 23 miles that day – back to the trail along the road, then we headed down to the bottom of the valley to then climb back up to the path on the edge of another moor. We stopped for breakfast overlooking the Llyn y Fan Fach reservoir, and then followed the path over and past Llyn y Fan Fawr. I really enjoyed this section on the edge of the moor with amazing 360 degree views. Passing the trig at 802m we continued and began to head down to the main road before again heading up onto the Ogof Ffynnon Ddu (locally known as OFD) nature reserve, known for its large system of underground caves – the deepest and longest in Britain. As a teenager I did some caving and pot-holing on cadet trips – but I have to say that these days the thought of pot-holing sends shudders down my spine.

As we came off the moor, we picked up the Roman road of Sarn Helen, which led us up another climb over a moor and then down again at the end of the day. We were staying at the YHA at the bottom of the Pen Y Fan. We took the OS mapped route – which meant that the descent down to the road was incredibly steep and unnerving to say the least. Quite dizzying in fact. David was taking it steady because of his slightly dodgy knee which was giving him some issues. I would be lost without my walking poles on sections such as that to keep myself from tripping and tumbling down. It took a good deal of concentration with one's footing and by the time we reached the bottom we were glad to have survived.

The short walk to the YHA was kept at a pace as we had planned to get a cooked meal there and had just 15 minutes to spare to order food from the kitchen before it shut and all the staff went home. Thankfully the hostel's room's ensuite shower, followed by clean clothes, a pint and hot food hit the spot. We had been out all day, walking for over 12 hours with just three short breaks – and covered some 23.13 miles – with 5509 ft elevation gain.

We got up early again the next day and would have set off sooner but had paid for a continental breakfast which we had high hopes for. We were told we could take some as a packed breakfast after 7:30am when the staff arrived to set it out. I am sure that when I stayed in a YHA in Ironbridge some time ago the continental breakfast was pretty good. Sadly, this YHA had little on offer. If we took too much it would seem very obvious – despite the fact that we had paid for a 'eat as much as you like' breakfast. Slim pickings indeed.

Nevertheless, we headed out of the hostel and picked up the Taff Trail towards the bottom of Pen y Fan – we are sticklers for getting back on the route, but I'm not sure how anyone who would have backtracked up that dangerous path 629m up to then walk along the ridge parallel to us on the Taff, to then walk down again to cross the road to then continue on the Beacons Way as it begins the climb up to Corn Du (873m) and Pen y Fan (886m) the highest point on the route.

We had breakfast just the other side of the gate on the track up – away from the carpark which was being extended. If you have ever seen David Morgan's YouTube videos on the BB – then you will remember the hordes of people he came across walking up the mountain on a bank holiday. No wonder the car park needs improvements. It's an easy tourist route up, but I wasn't feeling great that morning – super exhausted and massively lacking in energy. But I plodded up as fast as my Welsh pit pony legs could carry me. When we reached Corn Du, it is a simple walk across to the trig of Pen y Fan. A photo was taken by a kindly lady and we headed off to get away from the increasing numbers of people and it was starting to get warm again. As we walked down, we were lucky that a man noticed we had dropped a map out of the case – and we were grateful he managed to pick it up and give it back before it blew away.

We were ready for lunch in the shade at the bottom of this section, and the early afternoon path through the Talybont Forest. We were heading for Llangynidr – a pretty village full of narrowboats and cottages and a village shop to pick up some provisions before another couple of miles up to Bwlch – where we had accommodation. We must have looked tired as we lugged our shopping bags across the bridge over the River Usk – a kind lady stopped and offered us a lift up the 2 mile stretch of road to Bwlch – which saved us a good 30-40 minutes' walk uphill. They say the camino provides – well it certainly did on this occasion. I have never accepted a lift on a trail, and technically that is cheating, but we were grateful to have arrived at the Airbnb by a decent time, for once. Having walked 17 miles with 3730 ft of elevation on a very warm and sunny day we were ready for a hearty home cooked meal that evening.

Day 4 was a shorter day – about 12 miles to Crickhowell. It was a very pleasant section – made more enjoyable by the knowledge that we were not in a rush to get out of Bwlch first thing. The previous night's home cooked meal had replenished the body of depleted nutrients and I had my appetite back again. We headed across the



moorland and down one valley and back up to the moorland above Crickhowell. As we snaked around the edge of this moor area, once again we had lovely views, but it was all too easy to lose the path (lots of sheep tracks and desire paths here and no waymarks). We came to a point where we realised we had gone too far – so had to backtrack.

As we made our descent to the town, we came across some DofE students – as ever with their enormous rucksacks stuffed full of equipment and further items hanging off ready to get lost. I always wonder what they have in their bags which force them to place so much on the outside? My eldest son did DofE. I cannot remember his kit list, but I can remember him taking lots of food, so maybe that's what is inside?

Crickhowell is a very nice market town and should we decide to do the Cambrian Way, which passes through, we would certainly stay there again. The Airbnb was one of the most tasteful accommodations we have ever stayed in, and the host left so much good food and drink for us – we were unable to consume all that was on offer. Some hosts are very generous.

Day 5 was a reasonable distance in theory. We didn't have to leave the accommodation too early with 19 miles to complete but it was another really warm day. We ascended Table Mountain and then kind of missed the point at which we needed to backtrack on ourselves, to get down to road at the bottom of yet another valley. We realised in enough time so that we were still able to walk up high and catch a breeze rather than following the road – but again, the lack of waymarks was a bit of a pain.

With the down came another uphill climb to another moorland area before descending to Partishow. This part of the trail was confusing. We passed the old 11th century church but then it was difficult to decide which way the trail was heading – both on the map and on the ground. We decided to stick to the road through the village and out onto the track taking us uphill (again) and onto another section of moor. It was a steep climb down again – as we headed to the old abbey at Llanthony. We were able to get some fresh water – as the day seemed to be getting warmer and warmer with less breeze around in the valley. We had a gentle climb up the other side – at which point we joined the Offa's Dyke Path (ODP). We were close to the English/Welsh boarder at this point. David happily remembered some of the views from when he completed the ODP – which I agreed were stunning. This section was lovely to walk – you could take in those views and not worry too much about tripping up as you went. We were staying in a traditional B&B that night in Llanihangel Crucorney near Pandy. By the time we arrived, we were glad to have a cup of tea or two to revive us.



Unfortunately, the landlord wasn't too helpful in our request for a takeaway breakfast – we had some basic supplies, but he wasn't prepared to give us more than some out-of-date cookies, two apples and a banana. Apparently, they stopped doing packed lunches during Covid – and now clearly can't be bothered – 'you can pick up a sandwich at the petrol station' we were told. Well, we didn't bother with that the next morning as we were going to leave early and only had about 7 miles left of the trail back to Abergavenny. It was a lovely morning as we walked in the cool summer sunshine through the grassy fields away from the B&B. We had one more climb to do – over a local lump known as the Skirrid – or Ysgryd in Welsh. We decided to have breakfast up there near the toposcope at 486m.

David saw a runner ascending the path ahead of us and took the same route – only it wasn't the official path up – rather a desire path up the steepest part of the hill. I lugged myself up to the top – to a gorgeous 360 degree view. As we were finishing our breakfast, we spoke to some local dog walkers who told us that on Christmas Day, the local farmers have a few hours up here with a couple of drinks – and we imagined it could be quite a scream. As we came off the Skirrid, there were lots of people walking up the well-worn paths – it is clearly a favourite spot for the locals.

We were soon in Abergavenny and we reached the car. We were elated to have completed the route – it was tough and a real 'life experience' for us both – yet at the same time we were also rather sad that it was over. We had a good journey back to Kent and were glad – as always – to be home in one piece. Our minds full of wonderful happy memories and hearts keen to book our next trail.

EBOR WAY AND TABULAR HILLS WALK, 27th MAY – 7 JUNE 2023

From David Thornton

The Ebor Way is a 76 mile path, which starts at Ilkley and heads eastwards towards York and then turns north to Helmsley, where it links up with the Cleveland Way. It is a less-well-known route, especially as most walkers, having taken the trouble to get to Ilkley, will instead hop on the Dales Way at the same point and head in a north-westerly direction towards the lake district. I haven't yet done the Dales Way and am saving that for another day – it was always my intention not to tackle all the, what some might refer to as, signature routes, preferring to dovetail these with some routes that are less on the obvious radar, so to speak.

Despite a rail strike on the day before my travel, surprisingly everything ran pretty smoothly on 27th May, enabling me to reach Ilkley just after lunch, which gave me time to do the six miles I had planned that afternoon. An initial climb up to Ilkley Tarn, a very popular gathering place for the so called 'Pleasant Sunday Afternoon' movement, back in the late 19th century, was followed by a further climb up to Cow and Calf Rocks, a super viewing point over the town and along the Wharfedale valley. I headed on east over Ilkley Moor for a very comfortable stay at the Chevin End Guest House, just outside the village of Menston.



The next day the route continued along the high ridge above the River Wharfe, where you can get a great view of the impressive Wharfedale Viaduct, just before the route drops slightly to take you round and very close to Harewood House. I remember seeing Harewood House from a distance whilst walking the Leeds Country Way, back in 2021, so when I spotted it on the map again, I was really looking forward to getting a closer look. But it wasn't to be, as the border grounds are so well designed you don't even get the slightest glimpse, which was a little frustrating. The route then picks up the bank of the River Wharfe, heading into the centre of Wetherby, then on through Boston Spa, where I picked up some supplies, before heading off to my next stop, a nice little self-contained Airbnb in someone's garden, just outside Newton Kyme. I spotted my first very large willow tree crop on this day. I can't remember ever seeing one before, but I have since read that it is an increasingly popular form of biofuel and given it can be harvested every 2-5 years, you can understand why.

I was up and away at 5.45am on day three for two reasons. Firstly, I had 22 miles to get through before 3.00pm, which was kick off time for the FA Cup final. Secondly, this day also took me through the very centre of York, its Abbey and grounds and I wanted to spend just a little time enjoying this historical area. York seemed even busier than expected as I approached it along the River Ouse, around 12.30. As I reached York Minster at 1.00pm, it was rammed with people ... turns out it was the 'Pride' weekend, with a rally starting at 1.00. It was very vibrant, very noisy and very colourful and clearly everyone was having a very good time. I arrived at my B&B in Haxby in the nick of time at 2.59pm but by 3.01, as my head was still delving into my bag, my team went a goal down. I should have stayed in bed.

I had 26 miles to do on the final day, to get me over the Howardian Hills and into Helmsley. The previous night had been very clear and with a northerly breeze, the temperature had dropped. I had about 5 miles of river walking to do first thing and as is often the case with this time of year, the bank was overgrown with long and very wet grass. I had only walked a matter of yards on my first river section and I was soaked and very cold. On came the waterproof bottoms, which saved me rather and it was about 10 miles before I was warm and dry enough to remove them. When I arrived in Helmsley just before 5.00, the weather was a lovely warm 23 degrees and the square was bustling with people enjoying their Sunday afternoons, so I perched myself on a bench in the large square, had a bite to eat and took in the atmosphere, before trundling off to find the Youth Hostel for my overnight stay.

When I booked this route, I spotted the Tabular Hills Walk on the connected paths section of the LDWA LDP website. At 48 miles long, it travels east from Helmsley and finishes at Scarborough and it seemed too convenient to ignore and besides, the odds of me travelling this far just to do this route would have been quite remote. However, whilst convenient on the map, it proved rather tricky to plan, with accommodation seemingly very difficult to find near the path. Unfortunately, as the trail progressed it became very clear that I had rather rushed the planning in the end, settling to drop down from the path to the A170 at Pickering on day one and Snainton on day two, which added around three miles at both the end of each day and the beginning of the next. Not only that, but instead of

hunting thoroughly for accommodation in these two fairly sizeable locations, I decided to catch the bus all the way into Scarborough and then back the following morning, electing to stay in a B&B near the bus and train station. It certainly wasn't the best bit of planning I've done and it made for very long and tiring days, given the bus journeys were 75 minutes each way on day one and 45 minutes on day two: something I really didn't properly consider.



The Tabular Hills Walk was a very pleasant stroll, with a mixture of open farmland, a lot of old deciduous woodland and a couple of really nice moorland sections, as the whole route skims the southern-most border of the North Yorkshire Moors, finishing right on the coastline at Scalby. I really enjoyed the southerly views you get across the Vale of Pickering, as you can see the ridge on the other side, some 10 miles away, which is where the Yorkshire Wolds Way tracks as it makes its way towards Filey. There is something about that aspect of my walking which I really enjoy – looking across open land and recognising areas and paths which I know I've previously walked. It all seems to make the whole thing feel connected and gives me a real feeling of satisfaction.

Having reached Scarborough around lunch time on day three of the Tabular Hills, I travelled home by train via York, then Kings Cross and finally into West Malling early evening. Helen had been away walking the South Downs Way while I was up north, so we opened a bottle of bolly to celebrate, as another couple of trails bite the dust.

HIGH WEALD CHALLENGE – 8 JULY 2023

From Stephanie Le Men

Neil Higham had organised the previous High Weald challenges for years and made it a very successful summer event, with different routes every year. Unfortunately Neil moved up North so we created a subcommittee to take on the organisation – whereas Neil, a superman, had been doing it almost singlehandedly!

Jan and Neal O'Rourke had designed three new routes originally from Wadhurst with great views over the undulating countryside, mainly over Mayfield, while Jim Briggs and I were doing the admin side. Rather than starting from Wadhurst, we decided to start from Stonegate Village Hall, where we could use the cricket ground as a car park, and it was easy to access by train. There were also beautiful views from the hall – though this was not a criterion for selecting this hall!

Entries were slow coming in at first, but then picked up and reached our limit of 150 – however we decided to accept more – so we had 159 entries in total. This is a lot more than in the past years, although Neil remembers a time where there were in excess of 180 entrants.

We had organised the marshals' walk two weeks before the main event – however no one actually walked the 26 mile option due to the weather being very hot and humid. Overgrown footpaths were not helping either! I actually walked the 26 mile route the weekend before the event for a last check of the route description, and when I went back to the office my colleagues asked me if I played a bit too enthusiastically with my cats over the weekend – my arms and legs were covered with scratches! Fortunately, Neal and Jan very kindly cleared a lot of the vegetation a couple of days prior to the event. This was definitely no mean feat and we are very grateful to them.



When the day of the event got closer, the forecast was once again for a warm and humid day, possibly with thunderstorms. We were really hoping those would not materialise!

On the day itself, people arrived gradually as the start was staggered. We had decided to resume using tally

cards rather than relying on walkers writing their number on the route description because it had proved to be too easy to misread them. The numbers on the tally cards were certainly big enough for even people with poor eyesight to see.

The weather was at first very sunny but around lunchtime there was a heavy downpour. We heard a very low rumbling but fortunately that's all there was – no lightning! As entrants arrived back to HQ, they reported the route was beautiful but tough. Most actually enjoyed the rain that cooled them down. Fortunately everyone was accounted for at the end of the day and there was no injury. Before leaving, walkers were able to enjoy delicious salads appropriate for the weather, prepared by our famous catering duo – Helen and David. As usual we handed out certificates prepared by our IT wizard Michael.



We also had the pleasure of the company of our life president, Brian Buttifant, who spent the day with us, helping and chatting with many walkers.

I received a lot of lovely emails from entrants thanking the marshals for a beautiful and successful event – I happily passed this feedback on to them. They definitely deserve those thanks for being there for long hours with a smile!

If you want to remember the day, or if you were unable to do the walk, you can look at [those stunning pictures](https://ldwa.org.uk/Kent/W/8872/high-weald-challenge-2023.html) on our website (<https://ldwa.org.uk/Kent/W/8872/high-weald-challenge-2023.html> courtesy of Peter Salanieks and Eric Rolfe).

Next year we are planning (at this stage) to be back in Langton Green, where we were two years ago, with new routes. The hall is spacious and it is also easy to access by public transport. We hope that you will join us again!

A JAUNT ALONG THE WAY

From Jill Green

I so enjoyed reading David Thornton's Pennine Way account of when he walked it in October 2021. His experiences could then be compared to those in Andrew Melling's article recalling the same endeavour accomplished in August 1969. Numbers differ – it was interesting that Andrew expected to walk 250 miles, while David had a figure of 268 miles. My Certificate credits me with 270 miles. I keep a mileage chart which shows I recorded 263 miles – I assume I must have read that figure somewhere at the time.

The Pennine Way was one of the highlights of my walking life. This is because I walked it alone – very unusual for me as I am definitely a people person! My husband Dave made it clear he did not want to risk his well-earned annual holiday trudging through peat bogs or enduring days of rain, so it was no use dragging him along in case his expectations came to fruition.

My friend Spencer Lane said he would walk it with me when he retired, but I would have to wait until 2001. In the meantime, he suggested we should walk the Dales Way together to ensure we could put up with each other for several days. So we did and we did! It seems I passed his test as he started booking up Pennine Way B&Bs. Now we both eagerly looked forward to our mission.

Oh dear. Foot and Mouth Disease struck and caused cancellation. Then we had difficulty when trying to match free time in our diaries. Also, Spencer's mother sadly died, so it was put back again. (Third time lucky?) Then poor Spencer suffered a heart attack. I

am very pleased to report he now has an internal cardiac defibrillator implanted. He is still walking but sensibly keeping to shorter distances.

At the time, I was a self-employed hairdresser and the walk postponements meant I was continuously rearranging appointments. In the end, I decided the easiest option would be for me to walk the Pennine Way alone. Back then I was a few decades younger. I completed a race walking event in Roubaix, France, of 115 miles in 28 hours and, just three days later, I set off on the Pennine Way with nicely blistered feet!

My comfortable old boots helped my feet gradually recover each day and I had no further problems. (David suffered a knee injury whilst Andrew still bears blister scars to this day.) By discarding guide book, camera and spare shoes, I made sure my pack was not heavy. I carried just maps, compass and absolute essentials.

Spencer had made all the accommodation bookings using a book produced by his friend John Needham. The places were not always on the route but helpful instructions were given to phone ahead your expected time of arrival at a designated meeting place. Sometimes a poor phone signal caused a few hiccups. However, it worked out well – you were met and returned to the same spot the next morning.

I set off walking north on 24th September 2003. Ron Roweth from the Kent Group had a place in Edale and he came halfway with me on my first day. My Pennine Way jaunt took exactly two weeks and I finished on 7th October. The weather was fantastic. Not a drop of rain for 14 days! It was so dry I could have worn trainers. I did write a daily log and posted it to a friend but it disappeared in the mists of time.

I never got lost as I concentrated intently when using my maps and trusty compass. I even helped some cavers locate their cave and also went to the aid of a lad whose motorbike was slowly sinking in a bog. On one high point, I vividly remember turning right around and admiring the beautiful folds of hills in every direction – quite stunning. To my amazement, I resented the presence of other people and actually enjoyed the solitude.

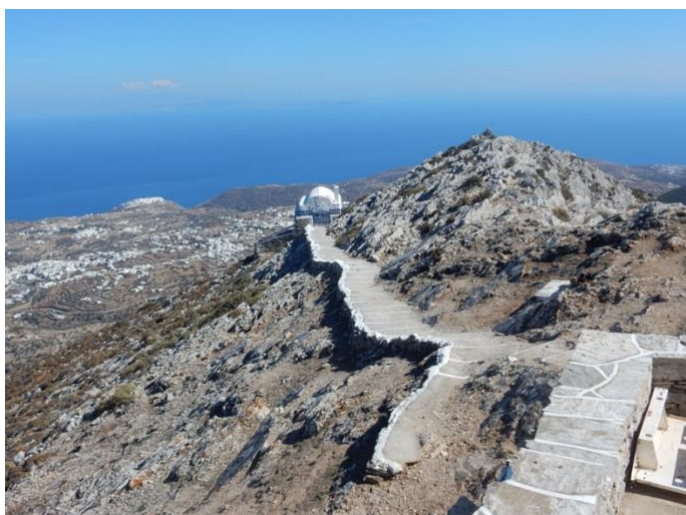
Dave rang me three times when I went up and over Cross Fell. Thankfully it was a lovely day and, on the top, I especially remember the beautiful mauve stones (fluorspar) sparkling in the sunshine. I did visit Cross Fell again in 2019 on the Hadrian 100 with Jim Catchpole. It was so much more challenging in the pitch dark and with strong howling wind and rain. We even became separated. I blew my whistle but no-one heard it. I began to wonder how long I would last in my survival bag. Luckily, very luckily, I heard Jim calling me, way up to my right. We were mightily pleased to find each other. A photo of that atrocious night next to one of my happy sunny day on Cross Fell in 2003 would make a marvellous comparison.

Looking back, I particularly recall the long last day of my solo Pennine journey. I set out in darkness and finished in Kirk Yetholm in darkness (in the shorter daylight hours in October) – it was the end of my marvellous adventure.

I regaled many of my escapades to friends and family. Thus it was that Jim and I planned to tackle it with friends in 2012. Unfortunately, I broke my ankle and could not partake. Even though it was June when they set off, they had terrible weather with rain nearly every day, but did manage to avoid the peat bogs. If I had been with them, they may have tired of my continuous commentary, e.g., ‘This is where you get wonderful views’. I was so lucky to see and experience the beautiful landscape which the weather now mostly denied them.

I want to say a very big thank you to both David and Andrew. It was their articles that brought back so many happy memories of my days along the Pennine Way.

WALKING IN THE CYCLADES – PART 2 (continued from April 2023 Newsletter)



ProfitisIlias from Profitis Eliseos

From Andrew Melling

A hill rose steeply to the south of the town but I was able to ascend the zig-zags in the shade, stopping often to take my turn in the on-line game of Words with Friends I was playing with my daughter. The path was well marked with red and white flashes painted on every convenient rock. I soon reached a plateau and the first of many more smart blue and white chapels dotting the countryside maintained, I learnt, by the municipality.

Skirting the ridge, the path brought me to a private convent, ‘Theologos Mounkou’. I followed the path, then road, into the pretty, sprawling town of Artemonas and, after lunch, I climbed up and down the stepped passages between holiday apartments and, no doubt, private homes. As ever, everywhere was whitewashed with blue trim. I had acquired some new, active, neighbours who recommended a valley route back to Kamares. This was more pleasant than the road, involving a scramble round a dam and bringing me into the town past

a campsite, which was empty.

After a second visit to Apollonia, I followed a long footpath that became a steep ascent with zigzags leading to the closely sited chapels of Profitis Ilias (one of two with that name, and at the highest point on the island) and Profitis Eliseos. A network of tracks and lanes were laid out on the hillside beneath me. Having spent some time wandering about the top, I could not at first find the right way off. As it was, the descent of the zigzags was somewhat trickier than the ascent had been!



Aghios Georgios Bay



Football ground

Back on the bus to Artemonas, but this time to change buses for the ride north to Cherronisos perched high on a narrow neck of land leading to Aghios Georgios. Forsaking that, I took a rocky path across a rocky plateau with the occasional stone wall to guide me, eventually descending to the lonely twin chapels of Aghios Philippos and Aghios Nikolaos. Steep steps led down to a jetty, so boats were the principal transport when the chapels were in use. Retracing my steps, I came down to the quiet, almost deserted, town at the head of what I would have called a fiord, were I back in Norway. I climbed up a bit to explore Aghios Polykarpos with its richly decorated interior and then was happy to be on my own for a light lunch on the water's edge. I was early for the bus home so had time to wander around the barren roadside including what may have been the island's main football ground.

Not everywhere was easily accessible by bus so I rented a car for a day or two, first stop the church, museum and, possibly 8th century, acropolis of Aghios Andreas. From there I went to the pretty village of Vathi, on the southwest coast, with its almost totally enclosed bay. There I had time for a scramble on the rocks before enjoying lunch in a restaurant actually on the beach. The next day, I went southeast to the small village of Faros, again with a pretty bay. Here there was a defined trail leading round two bays to a large church with an impressive outdoor font at Chrisopigi. No doubt a baptism there would involve the entire community. Backtracking round the bays, I found another restaurant on the sand for my lunch then moving on to explore the colourful streets and little marina of Platis Gialos.



Open air font, Chrisopigi

The season was ending with only one restaurant in Kamares still open for business. I had one day left for total relaxation before getting the ferry back for my second night in Piraeus (same room as a fortnight earlier) and a long bus ride to Athens airport.

To be continued

MAIDSTONE WALKING FESTIVAL 26 MARCH 2023

From Peter Jull

The curse of the Heart of Kent Walking Festival Sunday struck again with heavy morning rain forecast although improving in the afternoon. So, few of the 30 that had signed up through the Festival website were expected to arrive, but that 17 did was welcome. In fact they were harder than regular LDWAers who were only 5 making 22 starters in total. One 24 year old lady was in skinny jeans, ordinary trainers and a light jacket and no bag, although her male friend had one. As it turned out, within an hour of starting the sun was trying to break through and there was little more than spits in the breeze for most of the day.

The Linton, Loose & Langley Long Loop route had originally been devised to incorporate part of the original, now reserve, 100 route



so it dropped down from the westbound Greensand Way to Hunton potential CP before climbing back up to turn east and up some more to get over the Greensand ridge past Coxheath. Down into Loose there was a coffee revolution as several disappeared into the Chequers extending what was intended as a short morning break. The pretty Loose valley was new to even the most local locals and the introduction appreciated. It was feared Langley lunch might be late but was reached a little after 1 and the Potting Shed was accommodating despite being busy.



Dropping down to Ulcombe to restart the 100 bit back west the last orchard was particularly soggy and boggy. Asked how her footwear was coping, the woman in

trainers assured her feet were dry and indeed she looked less muddy than the rest of us. And then things started to fall apart. A plank bridge across a ditch that had previously been found partly under water but paddleable was invisible and impassable with muddy water everywhere. Retracing a bit, the untried diversion to a road was horribly brambly. A corner cutting footpath was eschewed being unfamiliar and crossing the same muddy water ditch and trusting the road would be easier. But round a corner – floodwater from side to side. A 4x4 came through showing it to be 1ft deep. Woods on the left provided an improvised bypass but missed the intended right turn leaving us on a diversion from the diversion. The woman in trainers showed remarkable speed, pacing Jan well ahead. Others started to straggle and, at the thought of the extra distance and later finish, 5 arranged pickups by local relatives. At Sutton Vallance, abandonment in pub with pick up cars sent back from Linton was contemplated, but all remainers committed to complete the route which was Greensand Way to the finish. Jan led the faster ones, Jim stayed with the stragglers and I shepherded a middle group. The least local, from Walton on Thames, whose previous limit had been 16 miles was in ‘are we nearly there’ mode well before we were. In the end all finished before dark – just. Not quite the LDWA advert intended but invitations were offered and maybe we’ll see some again.

TRAVELS WITHOUT A DONKEY ON THE GR70 – PART 1

From Cathy Waters

When Sarah Turner took up her three-year posting in Paris for UK Border Force last year, it seemed an ideal opportunity to walk some of the long-distance paths in France with her. She asked for suggestions, and I nominated the GR70, the Chemin de Stevenson, attracted by its 19th century literary and historical associations.

This hilly, 169-mile path is based upon the route Robert Louis Stevenson (RLS) pioneered in 1878, when he walked from Le Monastier-sur-Gazeille south through the Central Massif with his donkey, Modestine. I already owned a copy of *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes*, the travelogue RLS published in 1879 recounting his twelve-day journey. So together with Nicola Foad, the three of us began planning our walk.

As early retirees, Nicola and I could be flexible regarding timing, but Sarah was restricted by work and could only manage a week off in May. So we decided to walk the first half of the GR70, from Le Puy-en-Velay to Chasseradès (80 miles), and do the second half in 2024. Having settled upon 12 May 2023 as our starting date, the indefatigable Sarah booked Eurostar tickets for me and Nicola, and then train tickets for the three of us from Paris to Le Puy (via Lyon and Saint-Etienne-Châteaureux) and then returning from Chasseradès to Paris on 18 May (via Nîmes).

Sarah purchased the *TopoGuide Le Chemin de Stevenson*, which contained very helpful information about accommodation options, suggested itineraries and descriptions of the trail with IGN maps. We also found useful the official website – <https://www.chemin-stevenson.org/> – and Melinda Lusmore’s <https://ilovewalkinginfrance.com/> The official website can be read in English and both websites give up-to-date advice about the facilities available along the route (important to know as many of the villages are tiny and access to services varies).



Statue Notre-Dame de France, Le Puy

Neither Nicola nor I wanted to camp, so we were looking for gîtes or chambres d’hôtes to stay in. Booking ahead was advised, and we found that when we began to do this early in the new year, accommodation was already becoming scarce and we had to adapt our itinerary according to where we could get a reservation. Sarah was happy to carry a pack, but Nicola and I opted for a baggage transfer service, booking initially with Transbagages; but we abandoned them after we arrived in Le Puy and were unable to make contact to find out how they would collect our baggage from a locked gîte without any attendant. We sacrificed the fee already paid and booked afresh with La Malle Postale, which had an office open in Le Puy and provided an excellent service throughout.

Having arrived in the afternoon, found our gîte, and rearranged the baggage transfer service, we had a couple of hours to explore Le Puy. We visited the Cathédrale Notre-Dame (covered with scaffolding) and the enormous Statue Notre-Dame de France (Sarah climbed to the top of it), which is made from the metal of Russian

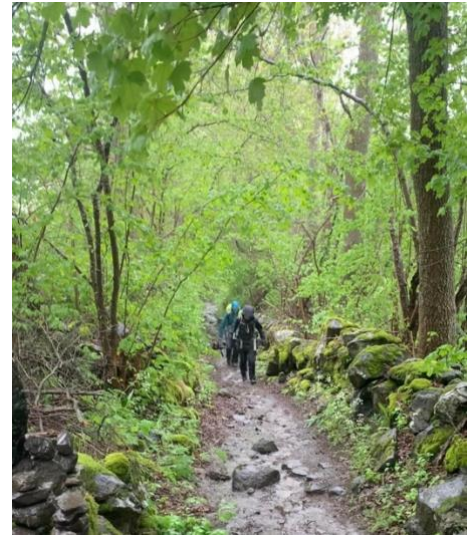
cannons captured during the Crimean War and provides stunning views of the town and surrounding countryside from its base. We had our first meal of the famous lentils that evening at a bistro.

Day 1 (12 miles to Le Monastier-sur-Gazeille) started wet and cold, and this remained the weather we had for most of our walk. Sarah and Nicola ‘went “French” with



parapluies in action’, to quote the former. This looked comical to the eye of a seasoned LDWAer, but worked in the absence of any wind. Most of the other randonneurs were wearing huge plastic ponchos with hoods. After petit déjeuner at a brasserie, we bought a baguette for lunch and headed out, crossing the Loire for the first time at Coubon and sheltering under the eaves of a garage in Archinaud to eat our lunch. We arrived in Le Monastier just after 2pm, and fortunately were able to get into the gîte early for a reviving hot shower, before exploring the village. This is where RLS purchased Modestine. After photos with a memorial of RLS, we found a salon de thé serving delicious pâtisserie. At the communal evening meal in the gîte, we were joined by two other groups: five French and another group of seven made up of Australians from Sydney being led by two Belgians. We would meet up

again with the Aussie group several times over the course of the next two days, and these recurring meet-ups with other walkers along the route was one of the nicest features of our trek.



Day 2 (14.7 miles to Le Bouchet-St-Nicolas) was also wet. It started with a steep and rocky climb out of the valley of the Gazeille and we could see nothing of the ‘splendid views towards the hills’ that our guidebooks promised. But the rain began to ease as we approached the descent into Goudet, providing good views across the valley. Crossing the Loire again, we climbed up to pass the ruins of the Château de Beaufort and sat on a log for lunch. The rain restarted but eased as we approached Montagnac and we noticed more wildflowers along the verges. As we ascended towards Le Bouchet, we encountered the rear end of our first donkey, which was making painfully slow progress carrying the baggage of a young couple with a baby and a dog. Our gîte – Le Potala (‘a right posh ole pad’

to quote Sarah) – was a new extension built above the 1637 home of owners Marie and Marcus, whom we joined for dinner in their enormous kitchen/dining room. Their English was excellent, and it was a fascinating evening hearing about *her* career as an architect and *his* working in human rights for the UN and other NGOs, not to mention enjoying their splendid food and wine.

Day 3 (12.9 miles to Pradelles) started dry (hurrah). We commenced our walk across a tableland covered alternately with crops, cattle and wildflower meadows and with cuckoos singing from the copses nearby. We stopped for coffee and bought lunch at Landos, then sat amongst the buttercups at Arquejols to eat it. Our destination, Pradelles, has been ranked amongst France’s ‘most beautiful



Approaching Pradelles

villages’, and we arrived early enough to explore its narrow cobbled alleys and stone houses. Options for dining were limited, however, and we were grateful for our gîte-owner’s advice to book for dinner at the nearby hotel, where we again met the Australian group, and our burly, jovial, French friend, Laurent, whom we had first encountered *en route* to Le Bouchet. By this time, as Sarah remarked, ‘we as a collective had been named “sportive”’ by some of the other randonneurs.

Day 4 (23.5 miles to Luc) was to be our longest section owing to difficulties getting accommodation. The rain soon returned after a dry start, but at least it was not windy. Much of the route went through forests of beech or pine, with Langogne, about an hour from Pradelles, the only large town. RLS walked this section in cold, windy weather, with steady rain and hail adding to his discomfort. He got lost in the woods and after receiving a hostile reception from a villager in Fouzilhac, when he sought help, he was forced to spend the night outdoors. Happily, although we had a long

descent on a winding stony path to reach the ruins of the Château de Luc, we found a fire blazing at Le Gîte d’Amandine in Luc, where we enjoyed what was arguably the best home-cooked meal of our trek – merci Amandine!

We started off into a biting wind on day 5 (17.4 miles to Chasseradès), but didn’t mind the cold since it came with sunshine. We wanted to visit the Abbaye Notre-Dame des Neiges rather than heading straight for La Bastide-Puylaurent, but found the signage confusing and missed the turnoff (the only point at which we encountered such a problem, as the GR70 is otherwise well waymarked throughout). When we discovered our error, having descended from the Sommet d’Espervelouze on the GR700 (following



everyone else), we headed back along the GR70 to see the abbey where RLS, despite being raised a

covered in bright yellow broom which had an amazingly heady fragrance. As we came into the tiny hamlet of Chabalière, we were greeted by a scarecrow version of RLS and Modestine - one of the many memorials – in the form of murals, statues and carvings – that feature along the GR70. Finally, what a treat to find cold local beer available to welcome the thirsty walkers at our final gîte – Les Airelles – in Chasseradès!

Notwithstanding three out of five days walking in rain, we enjoyed the trek, but will complete the second half in June (rather than May) next year in hopes of better weather. I am also determined to improve my minimal French, since, with the exception of Marie and Marcus at Le Potale, our gîte hosts had little English and I found that ‘Je suis Australienne’ did not get me very far conversationally at the dinner table.



Sunshine at last, leaving Luc

Protestant and considering himself an atheist, spent the night. From there, we retraced our steps to arrive at La Bastide for lunch in front of the village church. Then we ascended from the village towards the wind turbines we had been watching on the horizon for the last couple of days. The hillsides were



SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR 2024

From David Thornton

The 2024 Sevenoaks Circular will be held on Sunday 17th March. Once again, we have been fortunate to be able to book the facilities at West Heath School to use as our starting venue. This will be a brand new route, heading towards Knockholt, then westwards along the North Downs before heading south towards Ide Hill via Brasted. The route then returns to West Heath School via sections of the Greensand Way. 30, 22 and 15 mile routes will be on offer, with indoor checkpoints at Knockholt and Ide Hill. The marshals’ walk will be on Sunday 3rd March. Any offers for marshalling on the day of the main event would be very much appreciated. For queries about the day, please contact David Thornton on 07514 570847 or david.thornton1011@hotmail.com.

POSTCARD FROM SCOTLAND: LAIRIG GHRU ADVENTURE

From Graham Smith

On May 15-17, I enjoyed a memorable three days backpacking the Lairig Ghru – the famous mountain pass going through the Cairngorms – with my friend Peter Aylmer, from Essex & Herts LDWA.

Peter usually comes up to Scotland in May, and last year I walked the Speyside Way – an 80 mile National Trail, going from Newtonmore to Buckie – with him. This year his trip north of the border involved the Great Glen Way – another 80 mile National Trail, going from Fort William to Inverness – and then a walk from Aviemore to Blair Atholl which included the Lairig Ghru. The Lairig Ghru, as many LDWA members will be aware, is probably the most famous mountain pass in Scotland. It is a truly spectacular route which reaches 2740 feet at its highest point. It passes between three of the four highest Munros of them all – with Ben Macdui (4295ft) on one side, and Braeriach (4252ft) and Cairn Toul (4236ft) on the other.



Graham by the Pools of Dee on the Lairig Ghru

It is a great walk and it was fantastic to reach the summit of the Lairig Ghru, with views across to Deeside in front of us. We reached our day's target, Corrou Bothy, shortly after 6pm. We were backpacking and were planning to camp, but we had endured some showers and it looked like there would be more, plus we were more than 2000 feet up – so we decided to try the bothy for our night's rest, if there was room. Fortunately there was, and we had a very pleasant evening chatting with a New Zealander called Hal and two pals: called Kieran (who lives in Burghead, on the north of Scotland Moray coast) and James (from Dundee).

The following morning was quite overcast and damp, with rain (fortunately light) and low cloud. Peter and I set off just after 9am, and we certainly didn't envy our bothy friends, who were all planning Munro walks. Shortly after Corrou Bothy, the Lairig Ghru path forks, heading left for Glen Luibeg and, finally, Braemar. We headed straight on to Glen Dee, later swinging left to White Bridge, where our path took a sharp right. By now clouds were being replaced – slowly but surely – by blue sky and sunshine, and the showers were getting fewer.

A mile and a half later, we stopped for lunch at the Red House – a pristine, very impressive new bothy which can accommodate a good 20 people. Shortly after that, we got wet feet as we forded three shallow burns before reaching a delightful rising path across the moorland. When we reached Glen Tilt, the path narrowed but it was still most enjoyable walking – particularly as, by now, we were in constant sunshine. We stopped alongside Glen Tilt, having done 17-18 miles that day, and found a nice spot to pitch our tents. And although conditions were dry, the night was pretty cold.



Graham ascending Carn a'Chlamain

Peter finished the Great Glen Way at its Inverness terminal and then travelled to Aviemore, where I met him on the Monday morning after travelling from my home in Tain. That day we walked 13-14 miles, going from Aviemore to where the Lairig Ghru route starts at Coylumbridge. The first couple of miles go through pleasant woodland before the trees disappear as the Lairig Ghru itself gets closer and the path narrows. As you gain height, the path narrows and we had to negotiate many flat slabs of rock, but there were no difficulties. And although we were getting higher, it never felt like we were actually above 2000 feet because we were walking among the hills and not over them.



Peter near Bynack Lodge

We awoke to nice morning sunshine, and packed up our tents to ascend the 3159ft Munro Carn a'Chlamain. We followed a nice zig-zag path to the summit plateau before striding across to the cairn at the top. It was the first time I had scaled a Munro with a full pack since I was in my 30s (a long time ago!), and I don't mind admitting I found it pretty tough going. We then had a delightful walk around the summit plateau before taking a nice grassy path down to Glen Tilt. After stopping to have our lunch, we followed the track, which got progressively wider and eventually became a minor road, to Blair Atholl and the railway station, where Peter got the train south and I headed north for home. We had walked about 13 miles that day, so we had done 44-46 miles over the three days. It had been a wonderful trip.