

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION – Kent Group

furthering the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking

NEWSLETTER



Dale Moorhouse leads a walk in memory of John Gilbert with members of Kent LDWA, White Cliffs Ramblers and John Gilbert's family on 8 September 2024



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WELCOME to the December 2024 edition of the Kent Group Newsletter. We have news in this issue of our new challenge event, Wye Not Wander, held on 12 October. We also include some extracts from the newsletter archive as we come to the end of our 50th anniversary year. Thanks to Keith Warman’s preservation of back copies, I am currently in the process of scanning all the issues of the Kent LDWA Newsletter published before 2008. They will appear on our website in the new year.

The Committee has been discussing our Check Point at Sudbourne for next year’s Flower of Suffolk Hundred. Two shifts will be required to cover it on Sunday 25 May 2025, and volunteers to help are still needed. Please contact Stephanie Le Men if you are able to assist (slemen93ldwa@gmail.com).

Although no longer being held under the auspices of the Kent LDWA Committee, a small group, led by Peter Jull and now including 100s Coordinator Ann Wade, continues planning the Hunnypot Hundred for 2026. Volunteers are still needed for help with this major event. Please contact Peter Jull if you are able to assist.

We look forward to seeing members at the annual Christmas lunch on Sunday 8 December at Bearsted Golf Club and at the AGM on Sunday 26 January 2025 at Godmersham and Crundale Village Hall.

Cathy Waters

KENT GROUP COMMITTEE

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WYE NOT WANDER

Report from Peter Jull

The decision to move the later (calendar wise) challenge event offered by Kent Group from Sunday to Saturday, August to October and St. Margaret’s at Cliffe to Wye to make it more accessible by public transport was rewarded with an increase of entrants to 102. 76 arrived to start routes of 27, 20, or 14 miles, all climbing up onto the downs to pass above the Wye Crown, carved into chalk in 1902 for the coronation of Edward VII. They then wended their way round and down and up the dip slope valleys to





Chilham Mill seen on the Marshals' Walk

checkpoint 1 at Waltham. From here the 14 milers diverged to take in views of the Stour Valley as it cuts through the North Downs before dropping down into it for a flatter finish. The others enjoyed some wooded stretches before descending to cross the River Stour and passing through the postcard village of Chilham to reach checkpoint 2. A mile further on the 20 milers diverged to climb up to a wooded stretch of the North Downs Way and later find a footpath down into the valley to rejoin the 14 route back to Wye. Meanwhile the 27 route headed up through Perry Wood and across another valley before arable landscape led to checkpoint 3 at Sheldwich Lees. Turning for home to pass through Molash then more woods, walkers were surprised but pleased to find the drinks stop in Challock although it was not as hot as the route description indicated would condition its presence. Continuing through Eastwell Park revealed views of Wye Crown on its distant hillside before the final miles passed through Boughton Aluph then across and beside the River Stour.

The 0% chance of rain forecast was soon proved wrong with only the earliest starters getting underway before a drizzle set in. It had cleared by mid-morning though and when out, the sun was quite warm. The final finishers caught a final shower but were then treated to the orangest of sunsets. Being cultivation season the condition of arable fields was variable in time and space and being particularly large on the 27 route added navigation and energy challenges. It was said the food made it all worthwhile though. Congratulations to our 11 year old finisher completing his first 20 mile event despite being slowed down by his adults. Only 2 failed to finish their routes. The results can be found at this link: [Full Results \(ldwa.org.uk\)](http://FullResults(ldwa.org.uk)) The Marshals' Walk the preceding Sunday was completed by Eve Richards and Michael Headley (14 miles) Penny Southern, Nicola Foad and Cathy Waters (20 miles) Neal and Jan O'Rourke, Jim Briggs and Alan Stewart (27 miles).

Thank you to Keith Warman for his artistic contributions to the new certificate. Thank you to the cadre of organisers Penny Southern, Nicola Foad and Cathy Waters and marshals on the day David Spring, Vic Clapson, Dale Moorhouse, Rob Woodward, Helen Strong, David Thornton, Alan Stewart, Clare Evans, Jim Briggs, Michael Headley, Jan O'Rourke, Neal O'Rourke, Mike Pursey and Andrew Melling and to route checker Poppy Whiteside.

Look out for a second iteration in 2 years' time with different routes.

HIKING FROM 'COMBE AU LOUPS' (VALLEY OF THE WOLVES) – FRENCH ALPS

From Jim Briggs



The Chalet

In June Sheila and I returned to our son's skiing chalet in the Alps to test out the walking and the area in general. The chalet has been built with a view to its use in the skiing season and is in the mountains above the village of Combloux, near Megeve.



View from just above Chalet

June proved to be a very pleasant season to visit the area. Snow has gone from the ski slopes and avalanche risk in the mountains has passed. It is also outside the hunting season, which is mid-September to mid-December. The ski slopes are now rich in lush grass and flowers. Cows to produce the famous Reblochon cheese have just started to munch their way through the greenery. June is too early for holiday makers so the area is relatively quiet – ski lifts are closed as are some restaurants and hotels. It's an ideal time to walk the area. I came prepared with the complete set of IGN

1:25000 maps of the area (I had to buy four as the chalet is in the corner of maps) and a gpx chip for France in my Garmin, which I forgot to change on my return – it was less helpful on a social walk around Maidstone.

The advantage of the chalet location is its stunning views of Mont Blanc and the other mountains. These are gained by its location relatively high up the mountain and about 800ft elevation above the village of Combloux. The early morning brisk walk for fresh croissants and baguettes was a great work out – 20 minutes straight down mainly on paths, 10 minutes queueing (I thought no one else would be there!) and 30 minutes back up. Sheila was not tempted to join me on the croissant excursion, but instead could observe the climbers on Mont

Blanc setting out from the ‘space-ship’-like Gouter refuge using the telescopes at the chalet. Apparently climbing the mountain requires an overnight stop there before ascending to the peak and then returning off the mountain on that day. It is also semi-technical, with ropes, crampons and ice axes required for the ascent to the summit. Sheila will probably be successful in dissuading me from attempting it.



Mobile Milking Parlour



Musical instrument trail

The chalet is adjacent to a hiking trail up the mountain behind the chalet and paths lead on forever into wooded and meadow mountainsides. One of the paths that circle Mont Blanc is about a kilometre away, so it is possible to then spend about ten days walking around Mont Blanc from there. With the location on a mountainside, all the walks from the chalet are up or down with the return being down or up. The municipality provides all the signing for the paths. In winter some are used for snowshoeing. An easy musical-themed route runs from the path by the chalet and loops around the mountainside where oversized musical instruments mostly made from Corten steel provide the interest. The village of Combloux also offers the starting point for a day walk along the valleys to twelve Baroque churches. This is an easier walk than the mountain bagging.

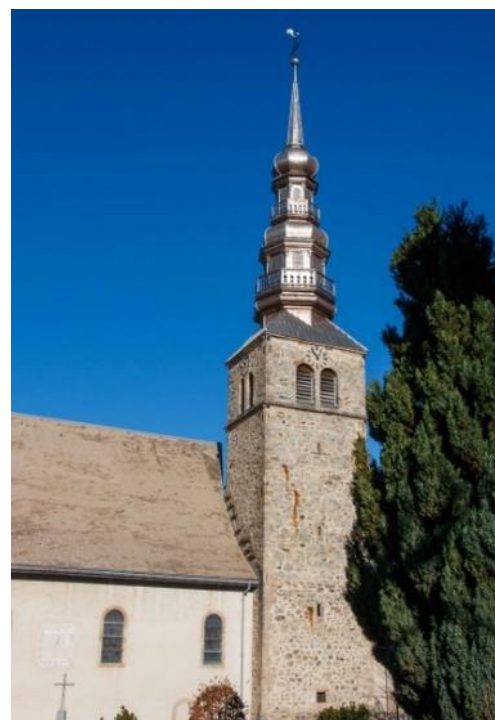
On this short visit, I explored the mountain directly behind the chalet and also the option of using this route to access the town of Megeve. Very few people are around during the week, but a few more at the weekend. The walking is a mixture of paths and tracks. The tracks are used for farmers' access in summer, and in winter the ski equipment uses them. There are plenty of options for spectacular views across the valleys to the Mont Blanc mountain range. The IGN maps and gpx file in the Garmin were reasonably accurate in representing the paths on the ground – as in the UK, paths sometimes wander off their mapped route due to fallen trees and water erosion. Paths are at times very steep and sticks are helpful –

they had also had a wet spring, so there was some mud in places.

Megeve is a very pleasant town and a bit of a tourist destination in winter and the height of summer. Plenty of ‘Bond Street’ type shops and some shops with a more local character. Megeve also has a few top class restaurants. Unfortunately, some are closed in June. However, we did try an offshoot of a Michelin-starred restaurant, which was excellent. If walked to direct, Megeve is about an hour on tracks and quiet country roads from the chalet and all downhill. The restaurant assures me that they can arrange a taxi back for us. It is about an hour and a half walk back with the steep climb on gravel tracks on the last approach to the chalet.

Chamonix and the tramway part way up Mont Blanc is not too far by car, but we have not yet explored that far.

We did try the local restaurant about 200m from the chalet and had a delightful



Combloux Church



View above Megeve

Sunday lunch of the local Haute Savoie fondue. In my view it is better with bread cubes than the boiled potatoes that another local restaurant serves. We were guided on the choice by Alain, one of my French team that used to work with me. He has retired to a nearby town. We also cooked our own food procured from the market in Combloux and supermarket in Megeve. My son has also recently installed a gigantic barbeque and a Texan-style smoker, both of which he has now discovered take forever to heat up. The company that manages the chalet can also arrange for a chef.

Last Christmas, we travelled to the chalet by flying into Geneva and renting a car from there. It is a little over one hour drive and car rental companies are used to people taking cars across into France. I understand it is also possible to do the journey to Combloux from Geneva by train and bus, or bus. For this trip, we took my car and drove the 870km from the Eurotunnel terminal. It was slightly surreal in the parking area at Folkestone where my car looked very ordinary being surrounded by supercars from the last five decades. The stickers on the cars eventually made me realise we were going out just before the Le Mans 24 hour race and every enthusiast in the UK was heading across the channel in their pride and joy. On the way out, we stopped in the Champagne region overnight. However, on the way back I drove straight through in around eight hours and the drive was not tiring (OK, I had the benefit of a cruise control that kept to speed limits and steered). The autoroutes were not too busy, but do add to costs – about £80 each way in tolls.

We are planning to return to the chalet in

June 2025 – say between 3rd and 19th June. Theoretically the chalet is supposed to be rented out, but so far has never been rented to anyone other than grandad. I don't think my son and daughter-in-law want it spoiled. The chalet has five bedrooms, three doubles with en-suites and another double and a room with four bunk beds and another bathroom. The main lounge and dining area is more than big enough for twelve and equipped with some toys to amuse – bar football, telescopes etc. Separate TV room. Kitchen is fully equipped and there is a separate utility room with washing machine and dryer. On the ground floor is a



Dining and Lounge



Swimming pool, Jacuzzi & Sauna

gym, swimming pool (with current machine to swim against), jacuzzi, sauna, shower and a double garage with table tennis table.

Sheila and I will be very pleased if anyone is interested in joining us. I would like the company on some walks in the other mountains and Sheila would like company for less aggressive walks. Modest contribution to the chalet would be welcome – i.e. to cover the tourist tax, management fee and something to the VAT. It will be much cheaper than other accommodation! Please contact Jim for more details – at the moment there is a bit of flexibility in exact dates but I need to be back for the High Weald Challenge.

1979 SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR CHALLENGE

From David Thornton

As most of you will now be aware, this year marks the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the Kent LDWA. Had it not been for the foot and mouth outbreak in 2001 and the more recent Covid outbreaks, resulting in the cancellation of the event in 2020 and 2021, we would also be marking the 50th edition of the Sevenoaks Circular Challenge Event next time it hits our calendar in March 2025.

To mark our 50th year of the Kent LDWA, I decided it might be a bit of fun to hunt down the oldest preserved Sevenoaks Circular route description and walk it. I initially approached Brian Buttifant, who was responsible for the smooth running of this event for a staggering 45 years. That must be some kind of LDWA record? Brian managed to find me a beautifully handwritten route description from 1989, the work of Keith Warman I was told. And then I thought: 'Keith Warman, of course, Kent's very own fastidious archivist – I bet he's got an old route description or two kicking around somewhere in that impressive library of his!' And goodness, did he

just! Having first dug out one from 1982, Keith then presented me with a typed route description from 1979, which he very kindly lent me for temporary safekeeping.

1979

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Long Distance Walkers Association
SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR WALK

Kent Group.

Please Note.

Read your route description, sentence by sentence. Note the Checkpoint closing times. If you reach a checkpoint which is unmanned, this will mean that you cannot complete the course within the time limit, and it will be assumed that you have retired, but please try to retire at a checkpoint and every help will be made to get you back to the finish. The following abbreviations have been used in the route description:-

FP. Footpath; BP. Bridle path; RD. Road; ST. Straight; TR/TL. Turn

Right/left; BR/BL. bear right/left; C/P. Checkpoint.

From Scout Hut follow rail line to RD. Cross & TL to Otford Village. This is the North Downs Way, ST thru village follow N.D. Way signs to TL into Telston Lane continue ST on RD track then FP to Donnington Manor. TL on RD then TR at Rose & Crown. Continue on RD over flyover bridge to TL pass Morants Court Farm on R & TR to go over stile signed N.D. WAY. Follow signs for 1 mile to C/P No.1. Grid Ref 485591. Close 11.00

.4 Miles.

Continue on N.D. Way for a further 5 miles, look for Yellow directional arrows on stiles. To Westerham Hill C/P No.2. Grid Ref. 441559. Close 12.30

.2 Miles.

Continue downhill on RD (A.233) to Westerham at 'T' junction TL to Wolfe statue. Cross Rd (A.25) & go up steps into Water Lane, continue to stile go over & continue ST uphill to stile. Go over & BL to Squeeze stile, go thru & continue on FP to RD. At RD TR then after 200m TL on RD signed French Street. Keep L at both RD junctions to pass thru French Street farm cont on RD to BR at next junction & come to French Street Nursery. AT Gateway BL on FP into woods. Continue ST to meet BP entering from L, TR & follow BP signed with Blue ARROWS thru woods to join RD. TL to cross roads & continue ST to pass 'Tally Ho' At RD end go ST on FP (Idle Hill) follow fence on R, at fork BR to descend to stile. Go over & BL to go over stile by gate ahead. Cross field diagonally to bridge on R, then ascend to stile. Go over & continue ahead to join RD. TR the immediately L to pass Cock Pub cont on RD & at junction TL on RD to pass Wheat sheaf Pub on R. After 200m at RD junction Cross Rd to C/P No.3. Grid Ref. 492518. Close 14.30.

.15 Miles.

Leave C/P & follow markers thru woods to join BP. TL and continue on main path parallel to RD to cross Yorks Hill Road. Cross & continue ST thru woods & at BP sign BR on FP (203) descend & follow to stile. Go over & BR to stile in wire fence, go over & BR to go over stile into woods. Follow FP & leave woods by stile, cross fields diagonally going over stile by gate. Follow track to stile on L, go over & TR to stile by Farm. Go over & TL on RD, after 50m TR thru gate FP(265). Follow L edge of field to stile by house. Go over keep ST passing Wickhurst Manor. At junction go ahead thru gate follow FP uphill & thru gate in Hedge. Cross field ahead to fence corner by building, continue ST crossing field & over stiles in hedges. Go ST to go thru stream and gate. Keep ST to go between iron & brick farm buildings. TR thru buildings then L to pass cottages. TL thru gate, BR & descend, over stream to stile ascend follow hedge on L to join RD. TR then BL passing Church on R to TL into unmade RD (just past graveyard on L). Follow FP past L of building (Ignore 1st

Idle Hill

WORLD

PCPI

stile on L) enter woods to join main track. BR to go over stile & continue ST on FP between woods & fence, to RD. TL & pass Prince of Wales Pub, continue on RD to roundabout, cross ST to Stone Lodge & C/P No.4. Grid Ref 544513 Close 1600
19½ miles.

Follow track to Coach House, BR, & come to farm, BR go thru gate & immediately TL onto BP going between Oast & Cottage. ST up gully pass between 2 iron gate then TR to go over stile, ST on FP to RD. (Shepherds mead) TL & pass Carters Hill Cottage then TR to go over stile. Keep to main path to, go uphill thru fence then over stile & ST to wire fence, TR thru trees to follow FP along edge of cliff, then descend steeply to RD (by LTD Access sign) TR & after 50m TL onto FP. Continue ST to go over stile then ST to stile on R, go over into field TL & come to stile & iron gate. Go thru & keep ST passing Wilmot Cottage on L continue ST on farm track for ¼ mile to Ighthan Mote Oast C/P 5 Grid Ref 584533 close 1700
23 miles.

Thru farm to RD TL & after ¼ mile pass 1:8 SGN TL onto BP, follow uphill, at field follow fence to wood. Keep ST on main path ignore L&R turns at RD, cross ST & ascend FP, at top BL onto main track, then at paling fence on R, TR & descend steeply, follow main track & after ½ mile pass ponds & join RD (A.25) Cross RD then TR after RD sign BL up embankment. Follow main track to 'T' junction (Nr orchard fence) TR & follow FP come to gully, descend to join RD (Oldbury Hatch). ST on RD to Cob Tree Pub. TL then BL nite slip RD, at Chapel TL onto FP (Heverham) go thru woods, at orchard BL uphill keep to L of hedge at top. At corner find obscured stile in facing hedge, go over & TR at corner TL to proceed along banktop. AT next corner go thru hedge & TR to follow R hedge, come to stile & plank bridge go over TR & come to railway fence, follow & go over stiles to come to rail crossing stile. TAKE CARE Go over then TL go around copse follow fence, passing ditch end then at grass track TR & follow to cross motorway, continue on gravel track then TL into field to follow R hedge, at gate TR go thru then BL to stile in field corner, go under TL & come to RD. TR & follow RD to Kemsing Playing field C/P 6 Grid Ref 561587 Close 1830
28 miles.

Continue up BP at end TL up steps then thru stile & follow path parallel to RD at corner TR to RD then TL & after 25m TR to go over stile, proceed uphill towards trees on skyline, & at seat BL onto FP continue ST going over stiles & pass Hildenboro Hall on L. Go over stile into field & TL follow L hedge come to stile (Here join North Downs Way) follow N.D. Waymarks for 1½ miles back to Otford Railway Bridge & Scout Hut. TAKE CARE ON THE ROADS.

Congratulations!!! Thank you for coming, we hope you enjoyed your day with us.

30 miles of route description crammed into just one and half pages of type. As Keith and I have joked on more than one occasion since, you certainly wouldn't attempt to get away with such little detail today. Add to this the further challenge that some of the landmarks we are so familiar with today, weren't even around in 1979. For instance, the M25 junctions 3-5 hadn't yet been built, the M26, whilst well under way, didn't open until November 1980 and the Greensand Way wasn't designated an OS mapped trail until June 1980. In addition, some of the pubs, clearly used as landmarks on the route, have long since closed. However, after a significant amount of head scratching and using what information was available, including the six checkpoint grid references – the only time grid references were provided, I hasten to add – along with some other sections I was familiar with, I managed to get it marked out correctly.

I really enjoyed walking it out. I got to choose my day including the very best weather, the luxury, which of course, is never afforded to an event organiser. And despite having walked many paths around Sevenoaks since I picked up the planning of the event on behalf of the Kent group in 2021, the route still managed to spring the odd surprise, which was great.

I decided not to type a blow-by-blow account of the route, apart from the fact that it started and finished at Otford Scout Hut, a far cry from the relative chandeliered opulence we currently enjoy in the Wedding Room at West Heath School today! However, if any of you fancy a go at following in the footsteps of our earliest members, I have loaded a GPX file onto the Kent website. Alternatively, the really brave ones amongst you could have a go at following the written route description enclosed. Good Luck!

DAY OF SYN – SUNDAY 25 AUGUST 2024

From Peter Jull

Six sinners stood to for a Day of Syn having escaped the punishment that would have been a wet and miserable walk had the Syn committee not changed their schedule to better suit a Sunday walk than the original Saturday. So it was a sunny Summer day with a couple of surprise 0% chance of rain showers and a stiffening breeze. There was still some punishment though as the route soon led across a mile of sapping shingle to get to Lydd on Sea. The Moon had sucked the sea far away so walking along the beach was nice firm sand.



The coffee addicts got their fix at Littlestone lifeboat station's shop for half past tenses and lunch had been in sight for some time. Along the seawall and Dymchurch arrived 40 minutes sooner than calculated so lunch was long. Bagpipes led marching king's men in kilts along the prom to fight the local smugglers on the beach but the crowd was with the smugglers and cheered every time a Redcoat 'died'. Our Day of Syn was 20 minutes of



spectacularly unspectacular bad acting with muskets phutting at each other across the sand before only The Scarecrow escaped alive. Realism was further diminished by smugglers having to put on HiVis vests which would never have happened at the first iteration of the re-enactment of which this was the 60th anniversary year. But it was good for Dymchurch businesses with crowds thronging, through which we had to thread our way out into the countryside.

Marching across fields a blood and bruising injury stopped us at a broken footbridge. A pause to patch up Nicola and we could march on, clipping the edge of St. Mary in the Marsh then beside sewers to clip the edge of New Romney. Thence to Old Romney church to pray for forgiveness of our remaining sins and more pinkness in the pinkest church in Christendom. When Disney made a TV series of Thorndyke's Dr Syn books in the 60s they pinked the box pews and walls and they remain that colour. Cross field paths that would have taken us past Midley's ruined church were in unusable condition. so it was all lanes back to Lydd to recover from the exertions of 43ft of ascent over 19 miles.

From Rudyard Kipling, 'A Smugglers' Song'

*If you wake at midnight, and hear a horse's feet,
Don't go drawing back the blind, or looking in the street;
Them that ask no questions isn't told a lie.
Watch the wall, my darling, while the Gentlemen go by!
Five and twenty ponies,
Trotting through the dark
Brandy for the Parson
'Baccy for the Clerk.
Laces for a Lady; letters for a spy,
And watch the wall, my darling, while the Gentlemen go by!*



EXPLORING ANGLESEY'S COASTAL PATH: A JOURNEY THROUGH HISTORY, NATURE AND WELSH CHARM, 27 SEPTEMBER – 5 OCTOBER 2024

From Helen Strong



In recent years, David and I have embraced a passion for walking England's coastal paths, particularly those around islands. After exploring the Isle of Wight in 2022 and the Isle of Man in 2023, our sights were set on the Anglesey Coastal Path for 2024. Unlike linear trails, we treat these trips as holidays, enjoying a fixed base for the duration. Anglesey proved to be a captivating blend of rugged beauty, wildlife encounters, and intriguing Welsh culture.

Setting Out

Our journey began on 28 September, as we drove to Anglesey. The eight hour drive – partly prolonged by the numerous 50 mph motorway road works – gave us plenty of time to anticipate the adventure ahead. Arriving in Holyhead, our chosen base for the trip, we settled into a modest but convenient accommodation close to the railway station and supermarkets. Although Holyhead itself lacks the charm of some coastal towns, its location made it a practical hub.

We planned to use a combination of public transport and our car, but quickly discovered that Anglesey's bus service was less reliable

than those on the Isle of Wight and Isle of Man. Buses were sporadic, often clustered around school hours, meaning early starts were necessary for longer walks.

Walking the Northern Coast

Our first day, from Holyhead to Llanfaethlu, offered a gentle 13 mile introduction to Anglesey's coastal scenery. The path was relatively flat, passing landmarks like a memorial to Charles Tunnicliffe, the renowned wildlife illustrator. After lunch, a sudden squall caught us off guard, but a quick dash for waterproofs saved us from a soaking and we found brief refuge near a cottage before continuing to the bus stop.

There, I struck up a poignant conversation with the village shopkeeper. She shared stories about her late son, a talented ultramarathon runner whose life was tragically cut short in a road accident nearby. It was a sobering reminder that one never knows what lies around the corner...

The next day, from Llanfaethlu to Cemaes, was a visual treat, featuring secluded bays, rocky outcrops, and over 1,700 feet of ascent. A 'closed' permissive path due to shooting season added a slight thrill, though locals assured us it was commonly used year-round. Highlights included seal sightings along craggy beaches and then the striking silhouette of a nuclear power station, an industrial landmark amid the natural beauty. The pretty harbour town of Cemaes provided a welcoming end to the day.

Exploring Holyhead's Headlands

Sunday brought a loop walk around Holyhead's headlands, including the dramatic North and South Stack cliffs, home to an RSPB reserve. At just 12.5 miles but with 1,600 feet of ascent, the walk combined panoramic views with opportunities to spot seals in the coves below. Despite the climbs, the day felt leisurely, and we enjoyed the simplicity of walking the loop back to Holyhead.

Challenges and Triumphs in Wild Weather

The following days demanded more endurance. A 20 mile trek from Cemaes to Moelfre on Day 4 was marked by over 3,000 feet of ascent and relentless rain. Starting before dawn with torches, we navigated rugged paths under a tempestuous sky. A curious local cat provided a touch of humour as it followed us out of town, seemingly oblivious to the storm. Breaks in the rain offered brief opportunities to appreciate the wild coastline.

The next day brought a change of pace, albeit unplanned. Bus cancellations forced us to start walking from Menai Bridge instead of Beaumaris. The delay offered an unexpected opportunity to engage with locals, two gardeners who worked on an estate, reliant on the same bus service. Their humour and stories lightened the wait, making the disruption more bearable. Though frustrating, the lighter 12 mile route allowed us to visit a historic church where the flamboyant 5th Marquess of





Anglesey is interred.

Southern Shores and Serendipitous Weather

As we continued south, the scenery softened into sandy beaches, lush dunes, and the pine forests of Newborough National Park. This stretch contrasted starkly with the rocky northern coast, made all the more enjoyable by clear skies and warm sunshine. Walking from Brynsiencyn to Hermon was a particularly memorable 16-mile day.

Anglesey's southern coast also provided stunning views of Snowdonia's dramatic peaks and the distant Llŷn Peninsula, and inspired us to plan a future trip to explore Snowdonia more thoroughly.

The resort town of Rhosneigr, a haven for windsurfers, provided a stark contrast to quieter stretches. Its coffee shops and modern holiday homes reflected a more cosmopolitan vibe. As we neared Trearddur Bay, we

opted to walk the final miles back to Holyhead, with the satisfaction of completing our journey round the coastal path of this beautiful island.

Final Days: Beaches, RAF History, and Treacherous Tides

Our last days involved walking around the coast near RAF Valley, where Prince William once served as a search-and-rescue pilot, and enjoying expansive sandy beaches. Walking along the coastline with tides in our favour felt like a privilege, though our luck ran out at a set of stepping stones at Aberffraw which were almost completely submerged. David confidently navigated the crossing, boots drenched in the process, while I hesitated, unsure of my footing. Encouraged by his calls, I made it across – though not without trepidation!

Reflections

The highlight, undoubtedly, was the sense of immersion in nature – seals basking on rocky shores, the rhythmic crash of waves, and Snowdonia's majestic peaks ever present on the horizon. Each step reaffirmed why these walking holidays have become a cherished tradition for us. As we look ahead, a return to explore Snowdonia beckons, but Anglesey's coastal charm will remain a vivid memory. For anyone considering the Anglesey Coastal Path, pack your waterproofs, bring a sense of adventure, and prepare for a walk that offers both challenge and serenity in equal measure.

THE WESSEX RIDGEWAY – 5-11 NOVEMBER 2024

From David Thornton

The Greater Ridgeway, which runs from Lyme Regis on the south coast to The Wash in Norfolk, is made up of four major trails: The Wessex Ridgeway (137 miles), The Ridgeway National Trail (87 miles), The Icknield Way (146 miles) and the Peddars Way and North Norfolk Coast National Trail (133 miles). Having already completed the latter three, I had planned to complete the full set back in November 2023, but a recurring foot injury forced me to cancel the trip at the last minute.

This injury has dogged my walking on and off since June 2023 and it has only been in recent weeks that I've felt that a full recovery is very close. While I'm on the subject of walking injuries, the severe knee inflammation I picked up doing the Pennine Way back in October 2021 has also, only very recently, fully healed, after three years of physio and close attention. The point I want to make here is that whilst it may appear, on the outside, that some individuals are breezing along with their walking trouble-free, the reality is that a lot of those same individuals are suffering with various ailments and just trying to manage them. So if you, as I have many times, got out of bed feeling a bit flat and frustrated because it feels like a nagging injury, or another issue that may never pass, always remember you're in good company.



Having made all my plans, I caught my train from West Malling, at what for me was a rather civilised time of 10.30 am, to arrive in Axminster around 3.30 pm, where I grabbed the bus to Lyme Regis. Here I stayed overnight in a very nice one-bedroomed fully-equipped timber dwelling, called Leotie's Place, at the rear of someone's garden. Since I had about 20 miles to do the following day to get to Beaminster, I was up at a decent time so that I could prep some food for the day ahead.

This food preparation consisted, as it often does, of toasting some bread, which I like particularly well done, verging on cremated. Given that all Airbnb's need to comply with regulations by, amongst other things, installing what seem to be the most sensitive smoke alarms available on the market, this preparing of toast often becomes a bit of a trial for me. Having opened a window or two, invariably I would find myself with one eye on the toaster, waiting for the first signs of smoke to drift upwards indicating that the level of burn was to my liking, whilst gently wafting away at the alarm with a bathroom towel, as was the case here. Unfortunately, on this occasion, I overlooked the fact that there was an equally sensitive alarm lurking in the bedroom, which set off with an ear-piercing shrill. Annoyingly, this seemed to then send a signal to the alarm I was now frantically wafting in the front room, which also set off, creating a cacophony of noise. The poor hosts must have shot out of bed to peer out, dreading that they would see a flicker of orange coming from the cabin window, just before it went off like a tinder box. I eventually got it all back under control and with a ringing in my ear, packed my food in the rucksack and set off.



If you examined the topography of the Wessex Ridgeway, you would instantly know that you're in for a really scenic route. Unfortunately, I didn't get to see one jot of this for two whole days, as the whole country was trapped in what is known as an anticyclonic gloom, where high pressure traps areas of damp weather close to the ground. We commonly call this fog and here in Dorset it was particularly dense, meaning all that I saw was a wall of white. It was a little frustrating, at times a challenge, but also quite exhilarating in a strange way. The mileage just passed me by really, as I walked the 20 miles to a B&B in Beaminster on day one and then 23 miles to stay at the very agreeable Brace of Pheasants pub in the tiny village of Plush.

I deliberately slid in a shorter distance for day three, about 16 miles in total. Having paid what I considered to be a relatively handsome price for my stay in Plush, I was not only determined to enjoy my sumptuous bedroom for as long as possible, but also take time to tuck into a very large and equally luxurious full English breakfast – including fried bread, minus health warning – I needed the calories. I can't remember the last time I treated myself to one of these. Fully fed, I walked away from Plush, detecting the faintest of breezes, which did enough to clear away just a tiny bit of fog, giving me the occasional small glimpses of what the Wessex Ridgeway has to offer. I'm going to summarise this at the end, but it suffices to say here that it is a very special trail.

It was nice steady walking on day three, taking me over rolling hills and quite a bit of woodland, with one very large beech wood called Ashmere Wood, which I

particularly remember. Of all the woodland landscapes to go through, I think there is something a bit special about beech woods in the autumn, with their thick blanket of crisp yellow, orange and brown leaves and many more still hanging on. The only noise is your boots ploughing their way through, with perhaps just a little birdsong in the background. There was clearly a very large pheasant shoot taking place in one wood just outside Iwerne Minster, my destination for night three. As I watched this closely, walking along, I hadn't appreciated quite how well coordinated they are, with not just beaters and gunners, but also a line of people in the open fields flanking the sides of the wood, occasionally waving bright orange flags, presumably to discourage any birds from trying to escape sideways.

I had quite a long 22-mile day to complete on day four, so I was away nice and early from the Talbot Inn at Iwerne Minster, as I continued to head north-eastwards to Tisbury. Squeezing in this kind of mileage during daylight hours in November, when it's heavy underfoot and also with a fairly heavy pack is sometimes pushing it a little. It was another day of just lovely rolling countryside, which took me up Win Green Hill, the second tallest summit in Dorset. It also took me through the grounds and past the ruins of Old Wardour Castle, built in the 1390's and apparently well worth a visit, before going past its large modern replacement, built in 1776. Tisbury is a very nice small town.





As I left Tisbury, there was a sense that I was starting to travel along what many would consider to be the main Ridgeway Road itself. You can feel this as the climbs are longer but less steep before flattening out on a high ridge, passing many stone-age hill forts. This feeling really expands when you leave the beautiful village of Hinden and head towards Warminster and Westbury from where the ridge seems to lead all the way to Marlborough, the end of the trail two and a half days later.

I left Westbury on the morning of Remembrance Sunday, a glorious morning of clear skies and a gentle breeze, as the route follows the edge of the vast Imber Range military training area. This was the third time I had walked this section, having previously followed it with Helen, whilst walking both the 30-mile Imber Range Military Path and the 93-mile White Horse Trail. It is an absolutely wonderful section of trail. I set my phone alarm for 11.00 so I could stop and pay my respects. As I stood there silently in the sunshine,

looking across at a picturesque expanse of slopes and hills, I considered how truly lucky I was to live on this island of ours and to have the freedom to pursue this special hobby of mine today. I literally dragged myself away from that moment, before heading immediately down to the village of West Lavington. Here I sat on a seat in the grounds of All Saints Church for a bite to eat, as I listened to an energetic rendition of God Save The King sung by the remembrance congregation, followed by Edward Elgar's Enigma Variations, performed by the organist. Perfect.

I had a bus to catch from Marlborough to Swindon at 3.15 pm on my last day, before I jumped in a train back to West Malling, and with 18 miles to get through I decided to leave Devizes at 6.30 am, so that I didn't have to chase the clock. Like the previous day, the walking here is very special indeed, assuming you get the weather which I now certainly had. The route takes you through Avebury and as I was ahead of schedule at that point I afforded myself the time to take a stroll around Avebury Henge, before heading out and up again, passing the ancient sarsen stone quarry in the Marlborough Hills, from which the Avebury Circle was constructed. It is astonishing to think how they transported these stones down from this location. What is even more astonishing is that the same enormous stones were quarried, transported and used to partly construct Stonehenge, some 19 miles away!

Having walked through the rather pleasant Manton Park I arrived at Marlborough an hour ahead of schedule, so I took the opportunity to take a stroll up and down the high street. With no Poundland nor Primark in site, it would be fair to say that Marlborough is a very well-heeled town. As for the Wessex Ridgeway, it is difficult for me not to overstate the beauty of this trail, even in spite of the fact that my first two days were rather obliterated by fog. So I'm just going to say this – if you're fortunate enough to get the opportunity to do just one trail in the south of England, pick this one. And if you don't fancy the mileage, but just want a taster, drive down for a weekend, park in West Lavington and walk the circular Imber Range Perimeter Path. It will certainly leave you wanting to return.



KENT GROUP AGM ANNOUNCEMENT

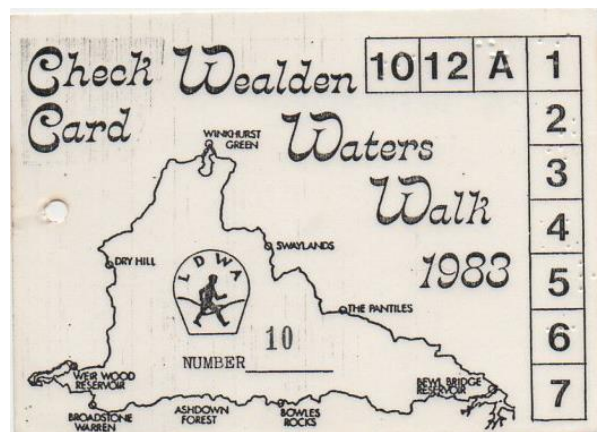
From Peter Jull, Nicola Foad and Penny Southern

The Kent Group AGM will be held on Sunday 26 January 2025 at the Godmersham and Crundale Village Hall, Canterbury Rd, Godmersham CT4 7DR, located just off the A28. As usual, there will be a short walk of around 7 miles starting from the village hall car park at 10 am, followed by lunch at 12:30 pm, and the AGM at 1:30 pm. Please put this date into your diaries. If you are able to join the walk, the lunch, and/or the AGM or wish to tender your apologies, please notify us by email to secretary.kent@ldwa.org. It is helpful to have a list of participants for the walk and the lunch, as lunch is prepared in advance off-site. A reminder will sent in the New Year, with a link to the minutes from the 2024 AGM. The last few years AGMs have been well attended, and we will look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the 2025 AGM if you can attend.

KENT GROUP'S FIRST OVERNIGHT CHALLENGE EVENT – THE 1981 WEALDEN WATERS

From Keith Warman

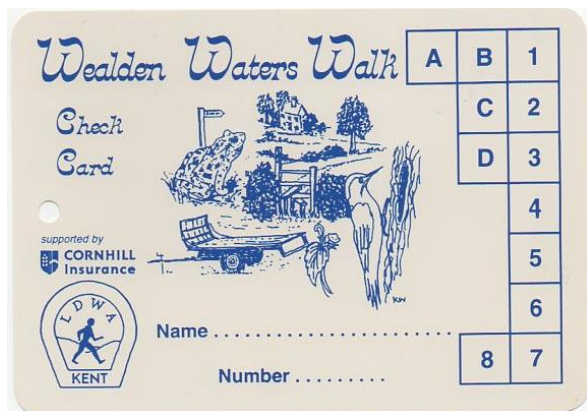
Devised and originally organised by Mike Smith, The Wealden Waters was a 100-km circular route from Tunbridge Wells which linked three reservoirs in Kent and Sussex – Bewl Bridge (now Bewl Water), Weir Wood and Bough Beech. The checkpoints were spartan for participants and marshals alike, but more comfortable arrangements were gradually introduced over the years, including the provision of a meal stop at Forest Row Village Hall. The time limit on the 1981 event was 24 hours but, thereafter, this was extended to 26 hours.



Keith's check-card from 1983, when he retired at CP 5 (50 miles)

Between 1981 and 2003, The

Wealden Waters (or Wealden Waters Walk to give it its full title) was held on 18 occasions and, during the 1980s, it gained a fearsome reputation due to incessant rain, strong winds, deep mud and the excessive number of stiles. From inception, it was planned to hold the event biennially but from 1986 it became an annual affair. It was not held in 1997 as, in its stead, we celebrated the LDWA's Silver Jubilee by holding a one-off 100-km White Cliffs Challenge. In addition, The Wealden Waters didn't take place in either 2000 (due to flooding) or in 2001 (foot and mouth disease). By 2003 entry numbers had dropped. It became increasingly difficult to enlist sufficient marshals, so it was decided that it had run its course. Then, in 2014, to celebrate our 40th anniversary, we decided to hold a further Wealden Waters. It was a successful and well-supported event with about 90% of the route utilising previous years' sections.



Blank check-card used from around 1990 onwards, with space for four self-clipping boxes

This brief history of the event serves as an introduction to the following article from regular entrant, Tony Twyman. Those with long memories will remember Tony as being a jovial and eccentric fellow, in whose company there was never a dull moment. Tony did the first event in 1981 and, after the sixth event, he became the only person to have finished them all – he must have enjoyed himself! He returned each year and extended his amazing record to finish the first 17 events. He entered the 18th (and final) event in 2003 but, sadly, he was a non-starter. Also, he didn't take part in the 2014 resurrection.

Upon completion of his 12th Wealden Waters, Tony put pen to paper and wrote this wonderful article. Although it has appeared previously, I thought it would be a fitting way in which to round off our 50th anniversary celebrations this year by publishing it once again – I defy anyone reading it to keep a straight face! Even though Tony was well-known for 'stretching the truth' on some occasions, this doesn't diminish his long-standing support for our event and his steadfast commitment to maintain his completion record.

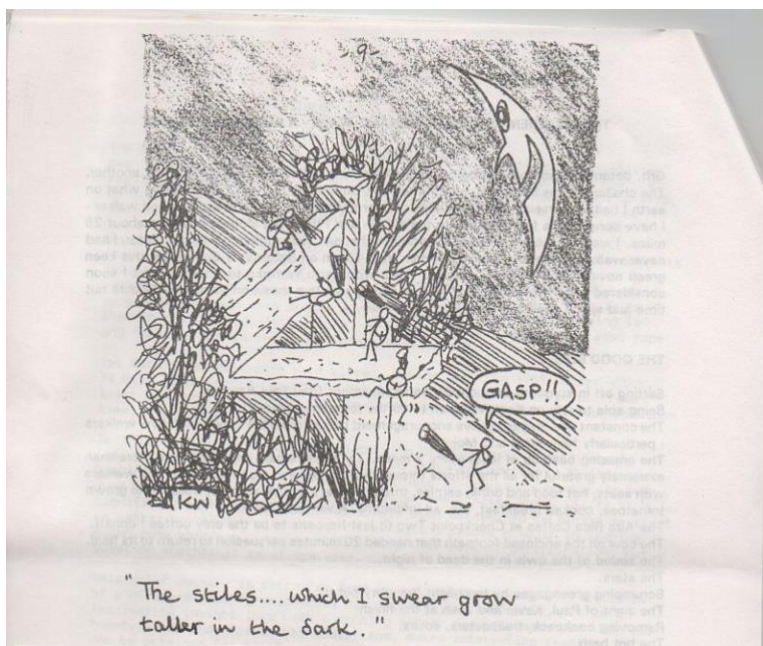
Now then, readers, be prepared to be amused ...

THE FIRST WEALDEN WATERS – 1981

From Tony Twyman

Looking back now, 1981 seems such a long time ago and, perhaps with the passing of time, the scars of those dark October days have healed enough for me to put pen to paper. For surely in its early days, the 'Wealden Waters' earned the reputation of being the nemesis of all major events, 'Nemesis' being the goddess who destroyed those who claimed to be all-powerful.

My walking career had begun some 18 months previously when I joined the local rambling club on a 14-mile walk one Sunday morning. The group comprised mostly of very small, stern, bow-legged old ladies, whilst I at six-two towered over them like Gulliver,



Keith's sketch to accompany Shirly Gill's article about her experience on the Wealden marshals' walk, from Newsletter 38, December 1995

Wealden Waters Walk
100km



17th to 18th October 1981



Object: To complete a distance of 100 kilometres on foot linking three reservoirs in the Weald of Kent and Sussex within a time limit of 24 hours

Starting and finishing near the chalybeate spring on the Pantiles, Royal Tunbridge Wells, the route goes via the reservoirs at Bewl Bridge, Weir Wood, and Bough Beech, passing through four counties. The terrain includes farm-, park- and woodland, orchards and hop gardens, and the northern fringe of Ashdown Forest. Approximately 20% of the route is on public roads the remainder being on paths and tracks. Maximum elevation is 198 metres a.s.l., total ascent 2000 metres. Navigation is fairly straightforward although the ability to use a compass will be essential, especially at night. Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 sheets covering the route are no. 187 (Dorking and Reigate) and no. 188 (Maidstone and the Weald of Kent).

Sent 21/8/81

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION *Kent Group*

The 1981 entry form, front

Ground Tennis Club in good time and, on opening the door, came my first shock. The hall was full of fine young men in singlet and shorts, clear-eyed, golden-haired, and with bronzed thighs that rippled as they bounded from one group to another. God! I felt inadequate!

The start was 1,000 yards away at The Pantiles, from where we would retrace our steps past the Tennis Club and then into the unknown. At the ring of the bell, the lady Mayoress led us from The Pantiles back to the Tennis Club where, without breaking step, she climbed smartly into the back of her official limousine and, with a brief wave of her hand, was gone. This was the signal for it to start raining. A cheer rose up ahead as the young Greek Gods raced off with their blonde curls tossing in the rain.

It soon became obvious that the rain was in for a long time as splishing soon became splashing as we threaded our way on faint paths through ploughed fields and those slimy-surfaced hop gardens, where we either tripped over loose string, fell over backwards or slithered about wildly with our arms in the air. Viewed from a distance, we resembled the inmates of the local asylum on a day out!

Not many miles after we had started, I noticed my boot lace was undone and, after a brief stop, I hurried after the others who, by now, had vanished. Two children emerged from a woodland path on my left and, ignoring their puzzled expressions, I hurried past them through a gate and down a path only to arrive at someone's back door. A gentleman emerged asking if he could help. I explained quickly and

and spent the whole day lumbering along like a Leviathan in their wake.

Three months after this first outing I decided to tackle the Pennine Way, which I managed in 12 days, carrying almost 70 lbs in my rucksack – mostly food, as I was not aware there were shops along the way. With hindsight, I should have included a gas mask as I was badly gassed at Gargrave and lucky to escape with my life!

Shortly after this I joined the LDWA, triumphed in some of the minor walks and soon raised my sights to greater things. My eyes fell on the advert for the soon to be infamous 'Wealden Waters', 100 kms connecting the three reservoirs of Bewl Bridge, Weir Wood and Bough Beech, with a 24-hours' time limit – held in mid-October with 14 hours of darkness. Only those who can see in the dark like a cat should have been included on the entry form.

The great day arrived. What should I wear? I settled for thermals, thick shirt, jumper, boots (the bigger the better), my new Craghopper trousers plus a rucksack full of spare clothes, batteries and various home-made concoctions that even a hungry bluebottle would not touch!

The journey to Tunbridge Wells was easy enough with a 12-noon start. I arrived at the Nevill

RULES OF THE WEALDEN WATERS WALK

The event is open to all who have reached the age of 16 before 17th October 1981. Those aged under 18 must obtain their parent's or guardian's signature on the entry form.

All participants are advised to have completed a walk of at least 30 miles since 17th October 1980

The walk will start at 12 noon on Saturday 17th October 1981. There will be a runners' start at 3.00p.m.

There will be seven manned checkpoints providing refreshment and a number of unmanned checkpoints. Checkpoint opening times will be given in the final details. Early arrivals may be required to wait until the official opening time, whilst late arrivals may be asked to retire, at the discretion of the checkpoint official.

A hot meal will be provided at the finish.

The event is not a race and apart from badges and certificates there will be no prizes. To obtain a badge and certificate participants must pass through all checkpoints and arrive back at the Pantiles before noon on Sunday 18th October. Those retiring or finishing out-of-time will be awarded minor certificates.

Each participant must carry the following items: O.S. map covering the route at scale of 1" to 1 mile or larger; compass; mug; spare pullover, The choice of footwear is left to the individual participant.

The total number of entries will be limited to 200.

Entry fee: L.D.W.A. members £3.00; all others £4.00.

The closing date for entries will be 30th September 1981. Entries will not be accepted after that date.

An entry that is cancelled before 17th September will be refunded, less 50p. Cancellations after that date will forfeit the entire entry fee.

Final details and route descriptions will be sent at the beginning of October. Please enclose two stamped and addressed envelopes (9" x 4") for details and results sheets. If an earlier acknowledgement is wanted also enclose a smaller stamped addressed envelope.

Entries must be on the official entry form or a photostat copy and sent to

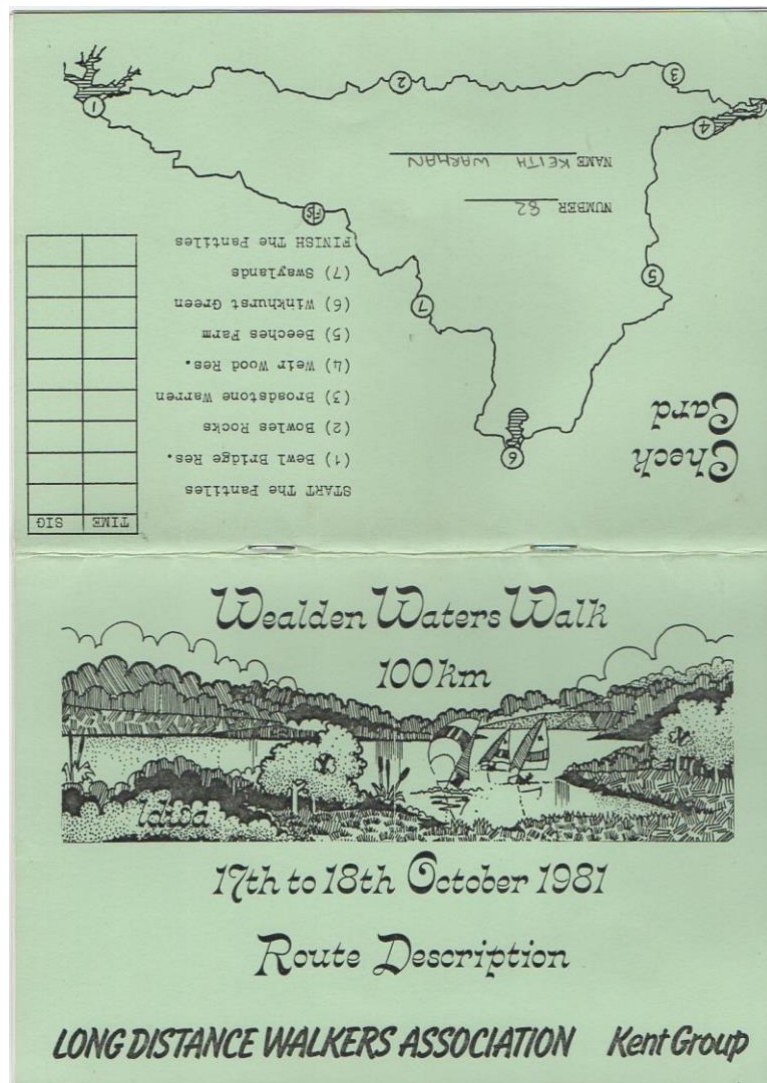
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The 1981 entry form, back. Note there is no mention of waterproofs in the brief list of kit which 'you must carry'

asked if I might use his side gate to regain the road. 'Yes', he replied, looking over my shoulder as he did so. There coming down the path behind me were about 20 walkers who had followed me. I shot through the gate like a rabbit, rejoined my small group and we spent the next few miles to the Bewl Bridge checkpoint telling lies about our walking abilities.

Neil Higham, from the Surrey Group, did most of the navigation as we progressed steadily through worsening conditions towards the Bowles Rocks checkpoint, climbing wobbly stiles, wading through swamps and fending off the dog attacks at Rock Robin Farm – which were all to become a feature of the Wealden Waters. We arrived at the checkpoint just as darkness fell. From now on, we would be navigating by torch-light, a new experience for me.

Neil, his friend Gary and myself left the checkpoint together. I found it very hard to navigate by torch-light and began to lose touch with them. By now, my Craghoppers were wet and beginning to slip down, causing an uncomfortable lump between my thighs – making walking even more tiring in heavy boots over wet, ploughed fields and terrible footpaths which, I'm sure, had not been used since the Romans left Britain.



The Route Description booklet, 24 pages!

We trudged on in pouring rain which bent the woodland foliage downwards, forcing us to do the same. We gathered other walkers as we went along until we were about 14 in number. It had, by now, become colder, wetter and very dark indeed. All of us were worried about being left behind and, as a result, we tried to walk three abreast on footpaths made for one. We pushed, shoved and jostled our way to the Broadstone Warren checkpoint, where we sat in the rain drinking hot soup by a large fire and we were very sullen, to say the least.

The next stop was Weir Wood Reservoir, checkpoint 4. My Craghoppers were by now so wet and stiff I could not tell if I was holding them up, or them me. Fed up with our progress, I went to the front to try my hand at navigation, as it seemed impossible to cover more than a few hundred yards without some hitch. Holly bushes were confused with oak trees and we crashed into each other in the terrible darkness. It was impossible to see each other in the forest, and almost as bad in the open, and we crashed through a front garden for a second time onto a small lane about two miles from the reservoir. We switched off our torches to save our batteries and promptly fell into the road-side ditches.

Up until now, the walk had been very tough, yet it was to get worse on the path around the reservoir to the checkpoint. I became convinced this path only existed in the tortured minds of incurable meths drinkers – with a high 'peerless' wire fence on our right and 18 inches away on our left was a hawthorn hedge with bramble tentacles which ripped at our legs, tore hats from heads and map cases from our hands. Exposed roots underfoot tripped one against the fence, thence into the hedge and back again, all punctuated by a dull thump on the head by overhead branches. 1,000 yards of this tested everyone to breaking point, and we had hardly reached halfway at 31 miles.

The Weir Wood checkpoint gave us the choice of sitting in the warm changing rooms of the Sailing Club or by the caravan outside. Needless to say, I chose the warm on this night, and on the nights in years to come, from which more often than not I had to be persuaded to leave so as to keep my 100% record intact.

Fortified, we set off once again. This time, our destination was Beeches Farm near Dry Hill Fort. The rain had eased enough for me to open my raincoat, allowing me to hang my compass down inside my over-trousers to stop it swinging about. We passed through the Sailing Club's gates, turned left up a grass bank and over a stile to cross a field on a 65° bearing. I was last over the stile and, to my surprise, they were all walking on different bearings: torches could be seen in the darkness over a large area. Who should I follow? I reached down inside my over-trousers for my compass but could not find it. In a panic, I pulled the lanyard hard and almost emasculated myself – I'd put it in my Craghoppers by mistake. With one hand on my 'near miss' and whimpering pitifully I stumbled through the night, reflecting on the lifestyle of some unfortunate tom cats and, by sheer good luck, found the gate they were all looking for. All pain forgotten, I called out, 'Over here – I've found it' in a rather superior voice. Having been congratulated by them all, I was elected to lead them across the next field which I did, and promptly got everyone lost again – a feat I was to repeat some years later in the company of Hugh Romer and Janet Chapman.

Passing through Forest Row, we picked up the Vanguard Way. This was a steady climb, starting on top of an earth bank, with exposed roots underfoot, soon to change to overhead foliage – this was bent double and caught the tops of our rucksacks and propelled us backwards downhill only to receive a sharp head-butt in the buttocks from the next person in line. I was convinced at the time that all this buttocks-butting caused the rain to start again as we trudged uphill, each one of us bearing a striking resemblance to Groucho Marx. A mile further on, we passed Thornhill Chicken Farm, where we were almost asphyxiated by the smell of chicken manure brought to life by the rain. The aroma took our minds off route-finding and, as a result, we missed our left turn and spent the next ten minutes thrashing about in the bushes, holding our noses and breath until, for the umpteenth time, Neil Higham came to our rescue. As so often in a major event, life outside the walk seems to recede and becomes meaningless as one struggles with one's mind and body to keep going. We continued downhill on another terrible path and my thoughts turned to the Greek Gods ahead. In my mind's eye, I saw them impervious to the mud and cold, shaking the rain from their golden locks and gliding through the darkness with smiles on their faces, revealing rows of white teeth which went on forever.

The slippery climb out of the small valley brought my thoughts back to reality. We went through a gate into a field and – at last! – grass to walk on. My joy was short-lived as generous portions of cow-pat lay in great abundance and were very slippery indeed. Those unlucky enough to slip soon found themselves lurching forward in a most undignified manner, with their trailing leg waving wildly in the air like a windsock.

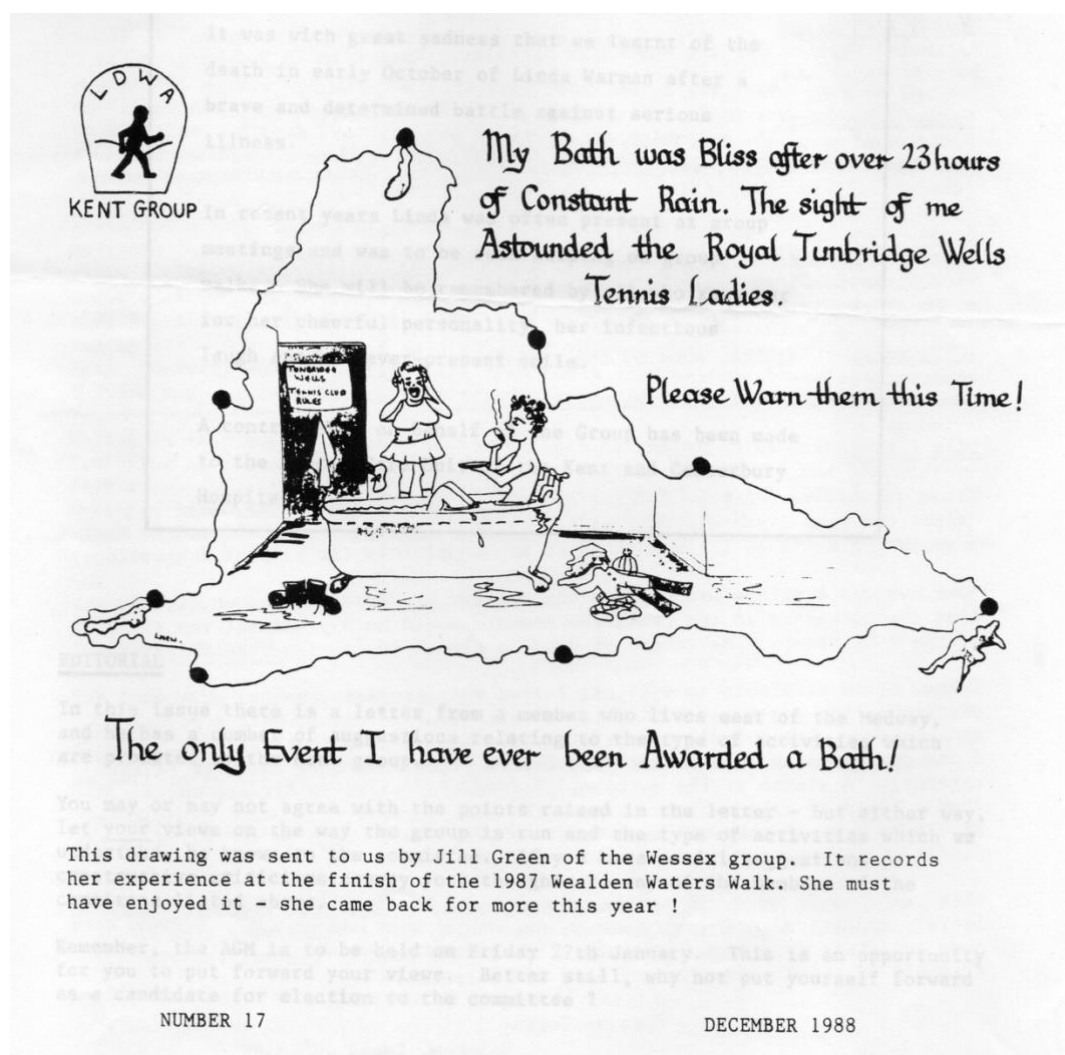
Several gates and fields later, followed by a mile or so of steady uphill walking, saw us arrive at Beeches Farm checkpoint. We sat on bales of straw drinking hot tea and eating cold rice while the rain swept in under the roof of the barn onto us. Moving among the weary walkers, serving tea, was a young man whose voice rose and fell like a rusty hinge on a kissing gate. Yes! Eric Rolfe in need of some Three-In-One oil!

When the time came to leave, only six of the fourteen rose. We shuffled off, soon to be enveloped in the bewildering folds of darkness over Dry Hill, down past New Barns Farm, wading shin-deep in goodness knows what, over ploughed fields and under and over railways. At one point, we walked round and round a field looking for a single plank bridge buried deep in an enormous hedgerow. On another occasion, we crossed the wrong bridge, covered 400 yards of heavy plough, only to discover a wide river instead of the railway we were expecting. We retraced our steps, crossed the correct bridge plus more ploughed fields (plough ad infinitum).

At Delaware Farm, we saw a flashing light in the distance. 'It's the checkpoint' we cried

and hurried forward, waving our torches in reply. 800 yards later, we gathered around the flashing light with no sign of the checkpoint. At the time, we little realised it would be a further two hours before we arrived at the Winkhurst Green checkpoint, having taken 4.5 hours to cover eight miles and around 20 hours for 50 miles.

Dawn had broken and it had stopped raining. Tray upon tray of food lay untouched on the table. We had barely sat down when someone asked the time. To our dismay, we discovered there was less than four hours to cover the final 12 miles or, at our present rate



From Newsletter 17, December 1988. Keith Warman explains: 'This was drawn by Lyn New, who was (and may still be) a friend and neighbour of Jill on the Isle of Wight. Lyn was always interested to learn of Jill's latest walking exploits and this sparked the cartoon. Jill had finished the Wealden Waters in the year the cartoon first appeared on the cover and was offered a bath – which she gleefully accepted. My parents had been marshalling at the event and were at the Tunbridge Wells Tennis Club when she finished. My mother fetched Jill a cup of tea in the bath, as per the cartoon. Then a couple of refined lady tennis players entered and were quite shocked to see someone in their bath.'

of progress, we would be classed out of time. I stood up, gave my rucksack and wet gear to a marshal – I told the others I was going on as I did not wish to be classed out of time after all we had suffered. They all agreed and we left the checkpoint with the marshals calling us back to eat some food. But it was too late as we were on our way to the Swaylands checkpoint, 6 miles away. Sadly, we did not know then that only 14 walkers had gone through Winkhurst Green before us, hence all the food on display. The marshals had had a long vigil for almost nothing.

As we hurried away, we began to split up, myself with a man who claimed to have no skin on the soles of his feet because of his wellingtons. As a result, he walked on tip-toe with his arms at 90 degrees to his body as though he were trying to fly.

We passed through Swaylands checkpoint with just six miles to the finish. By now, I was all in and my back was playing up. Worse still, I had left my water bottle in my rucksack and I was becoming very thirsty indeed. I stopped at a puddle, wondering if I should risk a drink. Just then, one of the original six caught me up and gave me a drink from his litre bottle of orange which he had carried untouched since the start.

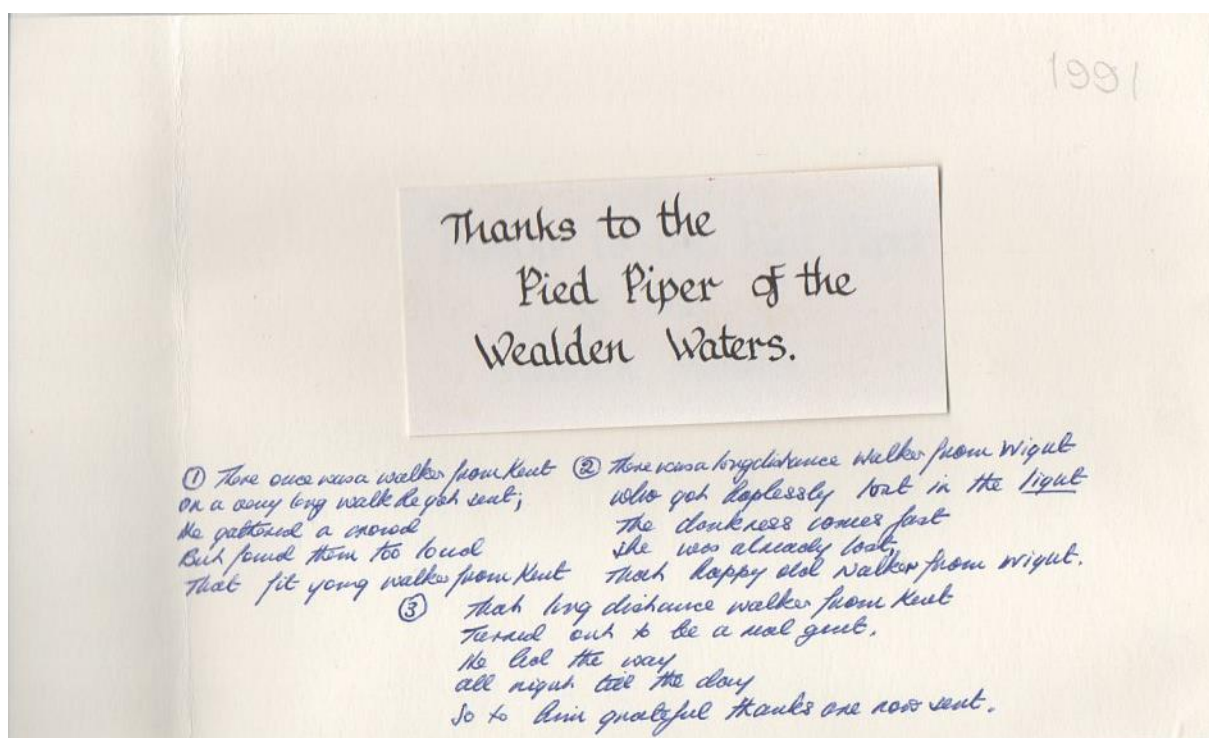
We arrived back at The Pantiles with 33 minutes to spare. I was so exhausted, I could not possibly walk the 1,000 yards back to the Tennis Club, so Laurie Lowe kindly gave me a lift back in his car. In the clubroom, we sat in complete silence, sipping our tea, heads hung down with fatigue. A few more walkers arrived. This made 27 home (from 84 starters) inside the 24 hours' time limit. Four more finished beyond the time limit and there were 53 retirements. It transpired that more rain had fallen in the month prior to the walk than in the previous ten months.

Two years later, history repeated itself and once again we slogged through rain, darkness and bitter cold. On this occasion, I soloed 40 miles in 13 hours to be the fourth finisher in 20.5 hours.

Following the 6th event, I became the only walker to complete every Wealden Waters and Mike Smith (the founder and organiser) became very keen that I should keep my 100% record intact until I reached 10 'not out'. This I promised to do, on the condition I received a gold watch inlaid with mother of pearl. Sadly, Mike was not present when I was invited to the Kent Group Christmas Lunch in 1992 to be presented with a beautiful plaque by their Chairman, Peter Barnett. This plaque was engraved with my name for being, 'The only person since the Earth broke away from the Sun to have completed all ten Wealdens'. This figure has now risen to 12 and I have now set a target of 20. Who knows?

Many memories return as I write this article, mostly of whimpering alone in the dark. Others include fending off dogs, being chased by cows in the night, falling headfirst into a river, lost in fog, suffering moon stroke and heatstroke, floods, just being missed by lightning, sleeping in bus shelters, losing my only torch-bulb, frightening a cow which then jumped clean over a five-bar gate and ran away, chased in the night by a farmer who thought I was stealing his cows, of starting over an hour late, terrible thirst and of the time when my car fell off the axle-stand and landed on my chest a few days before the event, meaning that my arms would not work very well. But perhaps the most lingering memories of all are those of the kindness and encouragement shown to me by members of the Kent Group as I endeavoured to keep my 100% record intact over the years. I know that courage is not always enough when you have to leave a checkpoint cold, tired and alone to face many more miles of mud, rain and darkness.

I trust you all enjoyed my journey from the past. As for the future, perhaps once again I'll tweak the nose of Nemesis and make it lucky 13. Oh, I almost forgot! What of the Greek Gods, you asked? Well, they all retired by checkpoint 2. Funny old world, ain't it?





Keith Warman explains the two images above:

'In 1991, I did the main Wealden Waters event and, shortly before nightfall, I encountered Jill Green, who claimed to have been hopelessly lost several times. We walked together and, eventually, were joined by six others to walk through the night. We had a jolly good time! Jill wrote this poem about me and Lyn New did this delightful cartoon of me on a card for Jill and her poem is written inside. "Trevor" was one of us, Jill couldn't remember Kevin Puttock's name. Jill gave me the card as a lovely reminder of a weird night.

Around midnight, whilst crossing several small fields between checkpoints 5 and 6, a friendly dog suddenly appeared and thought night-time walkies would be great fun. We had no idea where he came from and he didn't want to leave us. We dug out spare laces from our packs and Barrie Morgan (ex-Kent member now living in Herefordshire) tied them together to make a lead. He safely took the dog with us all the way back to Tunbridge Wells and later deposited it at Tonbridge Police Station. I seem to recall it was re-united with its owner, thank goodness!

Season's Greetings to all Kent LDWA members!

