

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION – Kent Group

furthering the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking

NEWSLETTER



Is this the most photogenic social walk of 2025? 'Winterhurst' led by David Thornton on 12 January 2025, photos by Kate Copeland

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WELCOME to the April 2025 edition of the Kent Group Newsletter. Spring has sprung and we hope you are out and about enjoying the glorious Kent countryside. In this issue we have a report on another very successful Sevenoaks Circular Challenge held last month, together with accounts of walking adventures by Kent Committee members at home and abroad.

We were all saddened to hear of the passing of our life President, Brian Buttifant, just before Christmas. Former Kent Group Chair, Graham Smith, has written an obituary for the April issue of *Strider*. We have decided to publish personal reflections from Kent Group friends who pay tribute to Brian in this issue of our Newsletter.

A brief summary from the AGM appears below. One person I neglected to thank on that occasion is Michael Headley, who generously gives his time in helping to proof each issue of the Kent LDWA newsletter. Warmest thanks Michael!

Cathy Waters

KENT GROUP COMMITTEE

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Other Committee Members	Stephanie Le Men, Helen Strong	
Web Master (non-Committee)	Michael Headley	website.kent@ldwa.org.uk

KENT GROUP AGM

After a short walk led by Rob Woodward, the AGM was held on 26 January 2025 at Godmersham and Crundale Village Hall. The 23 members who attended enjoyed splendid catering provided by Penny Southern, Helen Strong and David Thornton. There was discussion regarding the success of the three challenge events held by the Group in 2024 – the Sevenoaks Circular, the High Weald and Wye Not Wander – together with plans for future 100s: marshalling at the Kent checkpoint on the Flower of Suffolk 100 in 2025 and organisation of the Hunnypot 100 in 2026, which is being led by Peter Jull. Dates for Kent Challenge events in 2025 were noted: the Sevenoaks Circular on 16 March, the High Weald on 5 July and the White Cliffs 50, which is now confirmed for 30-31 August, starting from Betteshanger Sport and Social Club, with Marshals' Walk on 16-17 August. The difficulty of maintaining a full programme of social walks was noted and it is hoped that more walk leaders will come forward to contribute group walks.



Marshals Walk start, Sevenoaks Circular, 2 March 2025

IN MEMORIAM: BRIAN BUTTIFANT (1937 – 2024)



*Graham and Brian during Graham's last visit to his friend
in December 2023*

MY FRIEND BRIAN

From Graham Smith

Brian and I went back almost 30 years, to when I joined the LDWA in 1996. I walked a few LDWA events with Brian and it was always a pleasure to do so. But that was after the serious accident in 1991, when a scythe went into his leg as he was clearing a footpath and the wound went gangrenous, meaning he spent two months in hospital. So I never walked with Brian at his peak and I am reliably informed that that was some peak – breezing round events of various distances with great enthusiasm and regularly putting in good times on Hundreds. His fastest time on a Hundred was 29 hours 39 minutes on the 1986 Downsman – very impressive. He completed 15 Hundreds, getting his 10 Hundreds badge on the 1988 White Peak.

After his accident, he kept entering challenge events and continued to enter Hundreds but only completed one – the 1994 Dartmoor, in a time of 44 hours 20 minutes. Considering the seriousness of his injury and how it had affected his walking, that was pretty amazing.

So my main memories of Brian are from my time on the Kent LDWA committee, when he was group chair and he got me seconded in 2005, when I started organising the White Cliffs Challenge (which I did for 15 years). Later on I became group secretary and later succeeded him as group chair. We worked very well together, and I guess it's fair to say that he had groomed me to take over from him.

Brian's experience, and sheer expertise in all things LDWA, were absolutely invaluable. He was fully supportive of me as group chair, as WCC organiser and as main organiser of the Cinque Ports 100 in

2018, when his knowledge of what organising an LDWA Hundred entails was so important to the whole group running the event. And it was so fitting that, with Admiral the Lord Boyce, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, and then Mayor of Hastings, Cllr Nigel Sinden, Brian helped start the walkers on the Cinque Ports 100, walking the first hundred yards along Hastings seafront with them.

The Sevenoaks Circular was, of course, Brian's event, and he organised it for 38 years. It is so good that David Thornton, who took over from Brian in 2019, is planning the route so that it goes past the bench, on the North Downs near Brian's home at Kemsing, which was put up by members of his family and his friend Julian Reed. The bench looks out on Brian's favourite view.

When I succeeded Brian as Kent Group chair in 2017, the first thing I did was to get him made Life President and there's a little story behind that. Obviously, the committee agreed that Brian should be made Life President, but the LDWA's NEC had recently developed a draft Constitution for all groups to adopt. That draft Constitution contained no provision for making someone a Life President, so I contacted a couple of senior people in the LDWA and told them what we wanted to do – to be told they were not sure there was a 'procedure' for doing it.

After all Brian had done for the group, I wasn't having that, so I contacted Andrew Melling – one of Brian's oldest friends in the group, a very early LDWA member (no 85) and a former lawyer. Andrew came up with a simple solution – amend the draft Constitution to enable the committee to make someone a Life President. So that's what we did and we had a lovely evening – attended by scores of Brian's LDWA friends as well as his wife Brenda and other members of his family – at the Rose & Crown, Wrotham, where Andrew presented Brian with a watercolour of Knole Park, Sevenoaks (always on the route of the Sevenoaks Circular) painted by



*Brian leads the walkers along Hastings seafront for the first
100 yards of the Cinque Ports 100 in 2018*

Lesley Munro, partner of Kent Group member Dave Sheldrake.

The committee later went through the formality of adopting the amended Constitution – meaning Brian was made Life President before the committee was, technically, able to make him one. Later on I revealed all to Brian and he had a good chuckle. It had chimed with Brian's view (and, as it happens, mine as well) that the local groups **are** the LDWA – and his local group had chosen to bestow the honour on someone who had done so much to make it what it was, and still is (although Brian was far too modest to ever say such a thing).

What I remember about Brian, above all else, is his sheer enthusiasm for walking in general and for the LDWA in particular. That enthusiasm was quite infectious. In his later years, he was no longer able to walk Hundreds, so he saw it as his mission to encourage Kent LDWA members to start having a go at them. Scores of Kent members did so, me included.

He helped launch the KSS (Kent Surrey Sussex) Triple Challenge of 50 mile events to be walked in consecutive years – the WCC, the Surrey Tops and the Sussex Stride (all of which, of course, are qualifiers for Hundreds). Every year Brian and I used to meet with Tony Cartwright and Mary Dee from Surrey Group, and Chris Baines-Holmes and Shirley Greenwood, of Sussex Group, at the Bell Inn, Kemsing, to plan that Triple Challenge and to review its progress. The Bell is where we all went after Brian's funeral on January 24, held at the parish church of Kemsing, where Brian lived. It brought back many happy memories, particularly as Tony and Mary could attend.

In later years, I used to drive Brian to marshal on the Surrey Tops, the Sussex Stride and various Hundreds, and he was always such a pleasure to marshal with on checkpoints, because he was always so encouraging to the walkers, and treated them with immense care and empathy.



Brian and his grandson Sean after completing the SCC 30 mile route in 2023

I also used to drive him to the national AGM, where we would share a room, and that was such a pleasure as well, because everyone knew Brian. Without doubt, he was one of the most well-known and popular people in the entire association.

When I moved to Scotland in 2020, I kept in regular touch with Brian and we would telephone each other every couple of months. He was very interested in what I was doing with my new group – North of Scotland LDWA – and I used to send him photos of big walks, like the 36 mile Highland Coast to Coast (which has now become a challenge event) and the 22 mile Lairig Ghru (the most spectacular mountain pass in Scotland). He was very interested in them and often said how he would have liked to come up to walk them with me.

And I could hear the sheer pride in his voice when he telephoned me just after the Sevenoaks Circular in 2023, to say that his grandson, Sean, had completed the event. Family was always the most important thing in Brian's life and I know that his grandson finishing the Sevenoaks Circular gave him more satisfaction than any of his 15 Hundreds.

I last saw Brian in December 2023, when I walked Dave Sheldrake's Post-Christmas Sevenoaks Stroll during a trip south. Afterwards I called into Brian's home and had a lovely couple of hours, reminiscing and laughing about old times, and putting the LDWA to rights.

And that's how I will remember my good friend – happy, relaxed and talking about what he considered the best club he ever belonged to: the LDWA.

From Andrew Melling

I first came across Brian when I entered the 2nd Sevenoaks Circular in March 1976, having moved south of the river the year before. I expect Brian entered as well but I know he entered the next year because I have the results sheet showing that he finished just 9 minutes ahead of me. I never got that close again.

The Group had started in 1974 and was still small. Our first meetings, including our first AGM, were comfortably accommodated in a back room at the Bull in Otford. We were informal. Peter Rickards ran the Sevenoaks Circular and Brian ran everything else. But we wanted a chairman and Ernie Bishop agreed to fill that role for three years.

Three years later, we were on a group walk on a path meandering through a wood, as so many of our Kentish paths do. There must have been other members of the Group with us but, in my memory, I see only Peter, Ernie, me and Brian. Peter suggested that Brian should be the next chairman but Ernie would have none of it. Brian, he said, was far too good a secretary for his talents to be wasted in the role of chairman. So that was it and the lot fell on me for the next three years, more or less by default.

Brian continued to earn his description as a brilliantly effective secretary for eleven years, stepping down only in 1989. More recently, Brian served us as chairman from 2004 for fifteen years. Many members have contributed to the Group's 50 year success but it is

largely to Brian that we owe the existence of the Group as it is now. In recognition of Brian's huge contribution, in 2017 the Group elected Brian President For Life.

Brian added to his secretary role the organising of the Sevenoaks Circular which he did for decades, continuing to help at checkpoints as health allowed. He also helped at checkpoints on our other two annual events, latterly being around just to give encouragement to walkers.

Brian's personal walking achievements are outstanding. The LDWA nationally runs an annual 100 miles in 48 hours walking challenge. Brian completed no less than fifteen of these and then organised the Group's checkpoint until 2019.

For much of this time, Brian was also a footpaths officer for the parish council. In 1984 he co-wrote a guide to 'A selection of Walks In and Around Kemsing': ten walks ranging from 2.5 to 12.5 miles.

From David Thornton

I joined the Kent LDWA in November 2014 and the first time I ever spoke with Brian was at the 2015 Christmas Family Lunch, where I was fortunate enough to be seated alongside him and Brenda. At the time, I had no real appreciation of Brian's longevity with the group and in particular his enthusiastic attachment to the organisation's annual 100 mile challenge event, the interest levels of which would escalate several notches at the knowledge of a Kent member doing their first 100 challenge.

So when, between our main course and dessert, Brian learnt that I was setting out to take part in my first 100 mile challenge event in June the following year, the Dorset 100, I can vividly remember watching his magnificent eyebrows shoot up, with wide eyes that shone with excitement and a huge infectious smile, as he stuck out his hand, shook mine firmly and said 'well done, congratulations'. We kind of overlooked the fact that I hadn't actually completed the event, but that was Brian.

Over the following ten years of my growing friendship with him, I learnt that Brian possessed an inexhaustible amount of energy, enthusiasm and encouragement towards others, which made you feel as though your walking goal or challenge was as important to him as it was to you. He had a natural ability to instil in individuals a level of confidence, which made you feel you could achieve everything you set out to do. This was no more apparent than in my planning of the Sevenoaks Circular Challenge event, which I was very apprehensive about but even more proud to have been asked to take over from Brian back in 2019. During my many subsequent visits to see Brian at his home I would relish in sharing every detail of my route designs and check point plans and in return he always gave his wise counsel and positivity.

Brian became like a walking father to me and I shall miss his wonderful character and calming influence very dearly indeed.

From Keith Warman

I shall remember Brian as one of the most passionate members of the LDWA. He was always interested in the walking exploits and achievements of others and full of infectious motivation for everyone.

I first met Brian on a Group social walk in the summer of 1980 and it was clear to me that he was an excellent walker. He encouraged and cajoled me into entering longer challenge events, including my first Hundred, the 1982 Pilgrims. As I came into the finish in Canterbury, a smiling Brian was there to applaud and congratulate me.

Life gave him more than his fair share of setbacks, each of which he faced up to with his customary unswerving stoicism. An example of this was shortly after Brian's leg accident in 1991. Over a long period of time, he endured some delicate plastic surgery operations at the McIndoe Centre at East Grinstead Hospital and I decided to visit him there one evening. He was unfailingly cheerful and told me that his surgeon had called on him earlier that day. He was pleased with his progress, adding, 'Now then Brian, I hear that you're a bit of a rambler?' Then Brian (who was extremely proud to be a long-distance walker) told me that his immediate retort was, 'I soon put him right on that one!'

Brian served the LDWA (and Kent Group in particular) with distinction. He was present almost from Kent Group's inception and was, in succession, Secretary, Chairman and Life President. Notably, he organised our Sevenoaks Circular event each March for over 30 years and, in some years, the route used to go out and back in through Knole Park. We needed a key for the private lodge gates we used for access and Brian had to visit Lord Sackville at Knole House on the Friday before the event to borrow a key. He used to tell this story with delight, adding that one year, 'I gave His Lordship an entry form, but he didn't seem very interested ...'



Graham Smith's obituary in the April 2025 *Strider* details Brian's walking exploits and how he was an inspiration to so many. Brian once told me that the LDWA was the best club to which he had ever belonged. The Association is much the poorer for losing someone of his stature and calibre.

He will be sorely missed by many and I send my condolences to Brenda, Claire, Fiona and their families.

OBITUARY

Susan Verrell

Keith Warman writes:

I am sorry to report the passing of Susan Verrell on 22nd December 2024.

Susan's husband Ivan informed me of her death following a 12-month illness. She died peacefully at their home in Devon. When they were living in Swanley, Kent, Susan and Ivan took part in countless Kent Group activities during the period from 1982 to around 1993 (when they moved to the South-West). They both whole-heartedly enjoyed social walks, challenge walks and social occasions. A glance through our historic photo albums will show Susan and Ivan enjoying many LDWA activities.

Ivan remains an LDWA member (still having Kent as his Primary Group) and, during his LDWA walking endeavours, he was staunchly supported by Susan. However, Susan was also an excellent walker herself with such an easy-going rhythm. She always had a smile, a lovely disposition, a positive outlook and an eagerness to be as helpful as possible to everyone she encountered. She was also a keen and committed marshal and supporter offering plenty of encouragement to all.

I have many happy memories of time spent in her company. Her commitment to the LDWA included Kent Group's overnight social walk of the whole Vanguard Way in 1989. Susan drove Ivan and me to the start in East Croydon, met the walkers a few times on our journey south to the coast and was waiting at the finish in Seaford to bring us back home.

Susan completed many challenge events, including one successful Hundred (the 1986 Downsman, when she strode from Winchester to Eastbourne with Ivan in 32 hours and 50 minutes).

As well as LDWA activities, Susan and Ivan were also keen participants in IVV walking events over many years.

I send my sincere condolences to Ivan at this sad time.

SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR CHALLENGE EVENT 16 MARCH 2025

From David Thornton

Despite conditioning yourself to the fact that the weather on the day is completely out of your control and that what will be will be, as an event organiser you do become a little obsessed with the forecast for the whole week leading up to the day of the event. You just can't help it. So, when you consider the relatively wet conditions we have all endured this winter, I should think you would have to go back many years in order to recall a better day of weather to stage the 2025 Sevenoaks Circular. In fact, on the marshals walk two weeks beforehand, despite the fog during the first couple of hours, I allowed myself to imagine how great it would be to be blessed with similar weather two weeks later. In fact, in the end, it was even better, with blazing sunshine all day and a route that had dried out considerably, due to near non-existent rain since 1st March and some relatively mild and windy days. Quite frankly, it was perfect.

For the fourth year in a row, the walkers, for all three distances, 15, 20 and 30 miles, were able to enjoy completely new routes. But it was the 30 milers who were treated to a wonderful middle section of 10 miles and nearly 2000ft of ascent, taking in, what I would consider to be, some of the best walking country in Kent. That section needed good weather and we got it.

We had a total of 229 entrants and 41 people on the waiting list. 15 people cancelled between the closing day for entries and the day of the main event, but only 18 no-shows on the day, which was very pleasing indeed. So we had a total of 198 starters, which is the highest since I took over the event 5 years ago, with only one retiree and only one person being



David gives final advice to walkers at the start



Walkers starting from West Heath School

timed out at CP3. Despite the relatively high popularity of the event, numbers have always been restricted to between 225 and 230 because of the limited parking at West Heath School. However, there have been some considerable improvements to the school grounds in the last 12 months and on inspection of the residual space available after all the walkers had set off, I reckon there is scope to increase the numbers



Walkers head through Knole Park

slightly next year.

I would like to thank all of the marshals who put in huge amounts of work and effort on the day to make the event the success it was. These were as follows:



Walkers heading through Seal Church towards CP1

Car parking: Judy Rickwood and Alan Stewart

Checking-in team: Stephanie Lemen, Jim Briggs and Andy Clark

Check points 1 and 2: Nicola Foad, Cathy Waters, Eve Richards, Clare Evans, Michael Headley and Andrew Boulden

Check Point 3: Dave Sheldrake, Marion Meuller, Alan Stewart, Judy Rickwood, Andy Clark and Steve Russell

Finishing team: Stephanie Lemen and Jim Briggs

Transport: Peter Jull

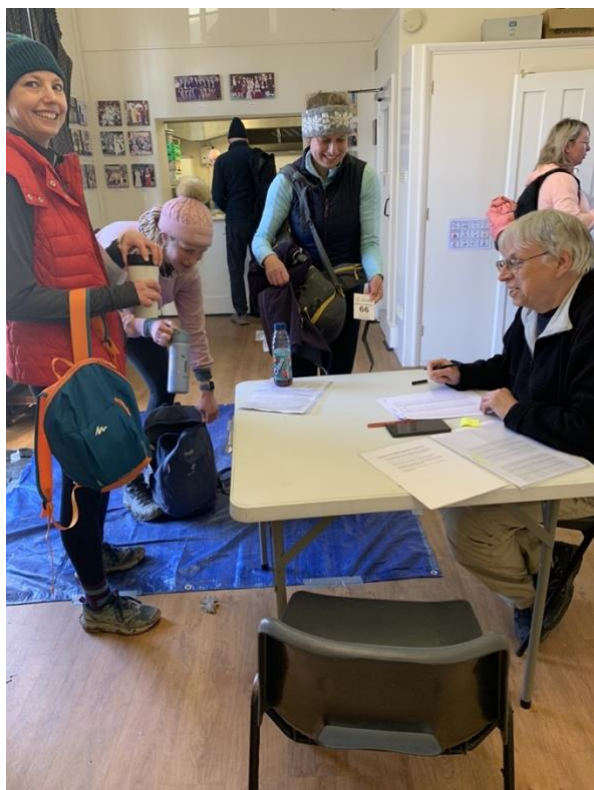
HQ catering: Helen Strong and Andy Clark

I would also like to thank those people who offered to marshal, but whose help wasn't needed in the end. Dale Moorhouse, Jude Unsworth and Penny Southern.

My lasting thought about the 2025 Sevenoaks Circular is this. As always, the routes I map out, including check-point locations, are finalised and walked out 12 months prior to the day of the event. Therefore, the decision to take this particular 30 mile route past 'Brian's View of Life' bench was made many, many months before the sad passing away in December of our wonderful colleague and friend, Brian Buttifant. Goodness, how he would dearly have loved to have been able to be at his bench, with many members of his family, to encourage all the walkers, including his grandson Sean. But it was fitting that we should have been treated to such clear weather for both the marshals and main event. It was as if Brian was looking out for us and over an event that he organised for 38 years. And those who stopped briefly and took a pew, were able to enjoy a very special view indeed.

The 49th Sevenoaks Circular will be held on **Sunday 22nd March**

2026 with three brand-new routes, all starting from West Heath School.



Andy Clark at CP3 desk



Marshals Walk: Alan Stewart and Jim Briggs at Brian's View of Life



Walkers taking photo at Brian's View of Life



Steve Russell and Peter Jull at CP3



Camilla Keller and Penny Southern at the finish

PENNY'S PENNINE WAY IN 13 DAYS – Celebrating 60 years since the first continuous long distance footpath was opened in Britain on 24 April 1965

From Penny Southern

I can't recall how long this walk has been on my to-do list of national trails, however actually doing it was an experience I will always remember.

Thank you, David, for sharing your itinerary. It got me started. I made a plan.

13 days: I thought ambitious, but anything you can do... to be honest I didn't even give it much thought. David's itinerary said 13 days, so I booked 13 days. 'Are you mad?' was something I heard a few times en route as well as at the very end of my 13 days, when I drank my free half pint of beer at The Border Hotel in Kirk Yetholm on the 21 September 2024.



Although alone when I set off on my adventure, I was very excited to be following in the footsteps of 4 very inspiring people. As keen walkers, three of these guys you'll have heard of. But one guy you won't have and nor had I until a chance conversation about my doing the Pennine Way with a running friend led to Marie casually mentioning that not only had her dad run the trail in 8.5 days in September 2002, he'd written a journal that she shared with me.

As brave as Tom had been to campaign for this long distance footpath; as interesting and relevant (but on occasions unrecognisable) the guidance of Alfred was; and as fascinating, creative and honest as Simon's journey along the footpath as a troubadour was; it was Marie's dad's journal that I drew inspiration from. On occasions I found myself laughing out loud and many an evening I read and reread about his experiences that I not only related to, but actually repeated 22 years later: priceless.

A massive thank you Tom Stephenson, Alfred Wainwright, Simon Armitage and Tony Barry.

I hope you enjoy the log I kept of my 13 days walking and sometimes running. The first continuous long-distance footpath opened in Britain on the 24 April 1965 when I was just 3 years old. I thoroughly enjoyed this at times arduous but rewarding experience of travelling the 270 miles on foot through the backbone of England.

Day 1 Edale to Torside – 15.3 miles or 24.5 km – completed ✓

The Pennine Way in 1935 was the inspiration of Tom Stephenson. His campaign before parliament resulted in approval of this first long distance right-of-way for walkers. Officially, Whitehall created the Pennine Way; but walking it I remembered that it was one man who imagined and created through his patience and effort the freedom I started to enjoy today.

Highlights – Beautiful remote scenery, very few people, no litter, jumping small streams which had merged into the path (at one point the only way to cross was to take my socks and shoes off), slab footpaths so I didn't end up waist high in a bog, and finally the huge efforts of the National Trust who maintain this incredible moorland for us all to enjoy.

Day 2 Torside to Hebden Bridge – 27.5 miles or 44.3 km – completed ✓

I'm one of Alfred Wainwright's biggest fans. It's an honour to follow in his footsteps but I'm sure he would have had a few choice words for today's weather.



Highlights – Setting off earlier than planned so I could complete the tricky path around Laddow Rock before the weather deteriorated. Loved this section but a little scary. The sun coming out at Standedge – amazing to be up on the rocks with no one else around. No other walkers (funny that!). Taking my waterproofs off at mile 19.

Looking forward to day 3 and Sal (a friend who lives in Haworth) joining the walk for the day. And it's 10 miles. Off now to order a big plate of chips and gravy.

Day 3 Hebden Bridge to Ponden – 10.3 miles or 16.6 km – completed ✓

Today was very civilised. However Sal's ears must be ringing as a result of me having not spoken to anyone in three days. I didn't even notice the showers – just pure sunshine

all the way.

Highlights – Sal joining me, and her homemade flap jacks, beautiful scenery, not too much rain, a four-helicopter fly over, wow that was impressive. A beautiful rainbow across the moorland. Wuthering Heights and seeing Heathcliff.

Looking forward to tomorrow – no waterproofs needed, forecast showing no sign of rain.

Day 4 Ponden to Malham – 23.5 mile or 37.6 km – completed ✓

Beautiful day with only a tiny shower as I made my way into Malham.

The climb to Pinhaw Beacon was the high point of the day. Spectacular views north to the Yorkshire Dales.

Highlights – at Pinhaw Beacon bumping into two locals who took a photo. I do love a trig point. Curlew, grouse and lapwings in abundance on the moor. Extra flap jack Sal gave me. Lots of fields full of sheep and cattle. The rainbow as I walked my last mile into Malham. Following the River Aire, then on reaching Becks Hall, getting to dip in the river much to the amazement of the guests at the hotel enjoying afternoon tea.



I've heard there's more sunshine tomorrow.

Day 5 Malham to Horton-in-Riddlesdale – 15 miles or 24 km – completed ✓

Wainwright was spot-on when he described today's route around Malham as 'the best walking territory so far encountered along the Pennine way' and few would disagree. I was treated to a majestic Malham Cove, Malham Tarn and plenty of limestone splendour, before the daunting but curious-looking lump of Pen-y-Ghent, the highest point on the Way so far.

Highlights – no waterproofs, just having my hydration vest, making me nimble on those limestone rocks. The two amazing climbs, incredible views, followed by fantastic downhill with a terrain where I could actually run with a bit of pace.



I arrived two hours earlier than my transfer, missed the bus by 5 mins, next train 16:30. Then a couple I spoke to on the route were just finishing their walk and what a fabulous act of kindness. They gave me a lift into Settle. I was very excited on reaching Settle as a fellow runner, sea swimmer, LDWA member and all round adventurer was joining me for four days.

Day 6 Horton-in-Ribblesdale to Keld – 26.4 miles or 42.3 km – completed ✓



What a day, walking through the Yorkshire Dales on the central Pennine Way. The rise and fall among the fells, amazing views and the longest continual ascent of the day.



Highlights – Camilla joining me, getting the early train, take-away coffee at Hawes and the four epic climbs, seeing our accommodation after 26 miles of amazing but challenging terrain. Fantastic day but need food and rest.



Day 7 Keld to Middleton-in-Teesdale – 20.9 miles or 33.5 km – completed ✓

A misty start to our day heading across Stonesdale Moor towards Tan Hill Inn (England's highest pub) then heading off across Sleightholme Moor before arriving in the town of Middleton-in-Teesdale on the River Tees.

Highlights – going past the half-way point of the Pennine Way, the honesty cafe in a barn at Baldersdale, which had everything (see photo), seeing a Barn Owl, a lovely long but gentle walk ending in sunshine, Camilla joining me for a second day.

A good day for recovery, getting ready for day 8 and Sue joining us, looking forward to it already.



Day 8 Middleton-in-Teesdale to Dufton – 21 miles or 33.2 km – completed ✓

A long day but a great day. Today was pure Pennine Way gold. Wainwright said it was a walk of near perfection and we couldn't agree more, just spectacular, a rocky scramble by the thundering falls at Cauldron Snout, very exciting, if not a little scary, followed by the High Cup Nick section which we walked open-mouthed for at least an hour. It was spectacular.



Highlights – Sue joining us and her homemade ginger and chocolate cookies, four waterfalls, two frogs, the amazing river Tees. Norman helping us recreate Tony's epic High Cup Nick photo. Camilla still walking with me.

Just tucking into the biggest bowl of chips (with gravy), looking forward to the highest climb on the walk tomorrow.

Day 9 Dufton to Alston – 19.7 miles or 31.5 km – completed ✓

Today's walk included the highest point, reaching the notorious Cross Fell, a long descent to Garrigill and

along the South Tyne into Alston.

Highlights – Sue's homemade cookies. As we climbed, the beautiful weather allowed us to see for miles, the Lake District to the west and heading back to the centre of the Pennines, a trig point pilates, paddling across wet pathways.

Another great day on the Pennine Way, Camilla's fourth and final day, what a star. I will miss her.

Day 10 Alston to Greenhead – 16.9 miles or 27 km – completed ✓

Wainwright describes this section as tedious, dull and complicated. I'll give him complicated but disagree with the rest. Back solo walking and on my 10th day, it was an enjoyable march through some beautiful countryside. The route zigzags between fields, farms, walls, bridges and bogs! They say the dominant noise of the day was squelching, especially across the moors, where I for the first time got a little lost as the route got fiddly and there were no conservation slabs over the moors.

Highlights – day 3 of beautiful sunshine. Wearing my waterproof socks. Seeing a Heron on the river South Tyne, more Belted Galloway cows. Getting a little lost not panicking and getting back on track. Ending the day at a section of Hadrian's Wall and the official end of the Pennine Way's Central section.

After four days of Pennine Gold I had missed my walking buddy. However I was looking forward to Julie joining for dinner at the Greenhead Hotel.





Day 11 Greenhead to Bellingham – 22.4 m or 35.8 km – completed ✓

Via Hadrian's Wall, Wark Forest and Shitlington Gap, what a visual and historical treat. Another Pennine Way classic, following the wall for 8 miles including some of its most dramatic sections (lots of memories from my HW walk back in 2018. We got to see the tree back then, sad to see it gone). It was odd seeing lots of walkers this section – more than I'd seen on the PW to date. However once I broke from the crowds and headed north it was just me and the silent forests.

Highlights – Julie joining me for breakfast and the Hadrian's Wall section, before she turned

right to head down to the wonderfully named Once Brewed. Fantastic to share this section once the mist cleared and it turned out to be another glorious morning. Getting to Bellingham and my room had a bath.

Can't quite believe I only have two days to go. May have to skip the chips and gravy tonight and treat myself to a salad.

Day 12 Bellingham to Byrness – 15 miles -or 24 km – completed ✓

At 'only' 15 miles it was a comparatively easy day to reach the Cheviot Hills.

Wainwright said the Pennine Way should have stopped at the historic Hadrian's Wall. I thought he may have had a point until I set off early today to enjoy (despite the mist) these two clear stages: heathery moor with wonderful views (not today!) but bog-hopping skills required; and forests with no bogs but lots of pine.

Highlights – hooray for waterproof socks, my new found skill of judging and jumping bogs (some crackers today) the remoteness of the moors, didn't see another walker, it was so peaceful if not a little eerie in parts.

I can't believe this was the penultimate day, great to have finished early so I can rest up for tomorrows big push over the Cheviot Hills and into Scotland.

Day 13 Byrness to Kirk Yetholm – 25.5 miles or 40.8 km – completed ✓

Final day. However, before the celebrations I had a few big hills, strong winds, mist and a few more bogs. Apparently the scenery was supposed to be fantastic. Sadly I'll need to google the Cheviot Hills as no matter how many trig points I passed I didn't see anything.

Then the final emotional descent into Kirk Yetholm to sign the book, collect my certificate and drink my free beer. Plus a few locals saying, 13 days...?!? 'Are you mad?'

Highlights – crossing into Scotland and seeing Russell and my dog Islay at the finish.



What a journey... so chuffed to have got to the end... huge thanks to Sal, Camilla, Sue and Julie for joining me on route. You made it really special.

Thank you Tom Stephenson for making it possible, to Mr Alfred Wainwright, my Pennine companion, to Simon Armitage, the poet and the amazing book he wrote on his Pennine experience and finally to Tony who ran it in 2002 in 8.5 days. His journal and photo gave me the inspiration to just crack on. What a guy, what an inspiration, what a legend.

And to finish....

'You have completed a mission and achieved an ambition. You have walked the Pennine Way, as you have dreamed of doing. This will be a very satisfying moment in your life. The satisfaction you feel is intensely personal



and cannot be shared, the sense of achievement is yours alone simply because you've earned it alone. You didn't walk the Pennine Way to please other people, You did it because it was a challenge and you wanted to see if you could do it. You wanted to test yourself. You didn't do it to earn memories but memories you will have, and in abundance, for the rest of your life, highlighting past days. You will have found you have enriched yourself. You will be more ready to tackle other big ventures and more able to bring them to a successful conclusion. You have learned not to give up. "Well done!" – Alfred Wainwright.

OUR DALES HIGH WAY ADVENTURE – A Journey Through Yorkshire's Breathtaking Landscape, 28 January to 3 February 2025

From David Thornton and Helen Strong

The final days of January brought perfect winter walking conditions as we embarked on the 89-mile Dales High Way. With clear skies, firm ground underfoot, and not a drop of rain throughout our journey, we couldn't have asked for better conditions to tackle this challenging route with its impressive 13,713 feet of total ascent. Our six-day adventure took us through some of Yorkshire's most spectacular landscapes, from historic canal paths to snow-capped peaks and everything in between.



Over Ilkley Moor

exceptional, allowing us to see for miles across the spectacular Yorkshire landscape. After 18 miles of delightful walking, we descended into the charming market town of Skipton, where we stayed at a newly renovated Airbnb. As the first guests in this freshly completed accommodation, we were conscious of



Malham Tarn late afternoon

our muddy boots on the new carpets – a constant consideration for us long-distance walkers!

Day 1: Setting Out from Saltaire

Our journey began with a Tuesday train ride from West Malling, changing at Leeds before arriving in Shipley by mid-afternoon. We spent the night at a charming Airbnb hosted by Shy, a photographer whose entrance hall showcased an impressive collection of portrait work from her diverse clientele.

Wednesday morning saw us head out along the canal toward Saltaire, where the Dales High Way officially begins. The weather blessed us immediately – a balmy 7°C with sunshine and light breezes as we crossed Bingley and Ilkley moors. The visibility was



Malham Cove

Day 2: Spectacular Features of the Dales

Thursday's walk began with a minor setback when David realized he'd left his walking pole at the flat. After a quick backtrack, we were soon making good time across firm terrain with more breathtaking views, this time over Flasby Fell. Our route took us through the quaint village of Hetton, where we passed what appeared to be an impressive Michelin-starred 'The Angel' restaurant – something to note for another time, perhaps.

After a long climb to Hetton Common, we stopped for lunch in the shelter of a field wall, grateful for protection from the cold. The afternoon brought us to some of the Dales' most iconic features: the impressive Gordale Scar, bustling with people enjoying the winter sunshine, and the magnificent limestone pavement of Malham Cove. A friendly photographer captured our moment as we were heading away from Malham Tarn. We pressed on, faces into the cold wind, over Kirkby Fell. As the sun was dropping, we were glad we did not have to go hunting for our accommodation as it was right on the trail, just outside Settle, having covered another challenging 18 miles.

Day 3: Conquering Ingleborough

Friday saw us departing before 8 am into misty but milder conditions. We followed the Ribble Way past Stainforth Force, gradually gaining height through farmland crisscrossed with ladder stiles. The route took us through tiny hamlets like Feizor and Wharfe, with increasingly massive hills looming to our left. At the crossroads of the Dales Highway and Pennine Bridleway, we paused for mid-morning cinnamon buns – vital fuel for what lay ahead.

At just under 400m elevation, the wind strengthened as we began the serious ascent of Ingleborough. With every few yards, snow cover increased, though encouragingly, descending walkers assured us conditions were manageable underfoot. The climb proved less daunting than anticipated, with our Yak Tracks remaining unused in David's backpack.

The reward at the 724m summit was spectacular – just before we reached the trig point, the clouds parted to reveal an extraordinary view of the Ribblehead Viaduct to the northwest. After a quick summit selfie in the biting cold (-2°C plus wind chill), we began what proved to be one of the most technically challenging descents we've experienced. The combination of snow, ice, and large step-downs on the sheltered side demanded complete concentration, and we understood why most walkers choose to ascend rather than descend this route – which is also known as the Swine Tail.

After a quick lunch, the final six miles to Ribblehead felt deceptively challenging as fatigue and hunger set in. We were warmly welcomed at Shepherds Cottages by Kate, whom David had stayed with during his previous Dales Way trail. Her hospitality is unmatched for walkers in this remote but beautiful area.



Summit of Ingleborough



Morning over Blea Moor

Day 4: The Ribblehead Viaduct and Dentdale

Saturday greeted us with another beautiful morning as we walked the first two miles to rejoin the path near the magnificent Ribblehead Viaduct. We waved to passengers on the passing Settle-Carlisle train as we traversed Blea Moor, past Whernside, making a mental note to return someday to complete Yorkshire's famous Three Peaks challenge.

Our route led us around the northern edge of Whernside and into the picturesque Dentdale. By lunchtime in Dent village, the sunshine was so warm in sheltered spots that it felt almost spring-like. The afternoon saw us climbing over Long Moor before descending into historic Sedburgh, known for its prestigious private school and book shops. We reached our accommodation – a characterful conversion in a very old property – in time for David to catch some of the rugby on television, a welcome rest after covering 15 miles.

Day 5: The Majestic Howgill Fells

An early 7 am start on Sunday brought the most exhilarating section of our journey as we immediately climbed onto the distinctive Howgill Fells. Our friend Tony Cartwright had previously described these to me as 'amazing folded hills', while Wainwright described them as a 'herd of sleeping elephants' – both descriptions proved apt. There was indeed something almost animal-like about their flowing, rounded forms.

The summits of Bran Rigg Top (672m) and The Calf (676m) tested the endurance of my cotton hankie – my nose would not stop running in the bitter temperatures of as low as -2°C with a wind chill that cut through all our layers. Despite the challenging conditions, the sheer majesty of these unique formations made this section a highlight of the entire route. As we made our slow descent, there was genuine sadness that this part of the journey was ending.



Early morning out of Sedburgh



The Howgills

The contrast couldn't have been starker as we continued across Ravenstone Moor, where low-lying mist created a somewhat bleak and disheartening landscape. Our arrival in Great Asby was slightly marred by passing through an exceptionally muddy farm that coated our previously clean boots – particularly frustrating when approaching the pub for our overnight accommodation.

The Three Greyhounds Inn in Great Asby proved the perfect remedy, however. A hot shower (eventually!), excellent food, and well-deserved pints created ideal recovery conditions, though the coveted spots by the open fire remained firmly occupied by locals. The hospitality was so exceptional that I felt compelled to leave a review – something I rarely do unless particularly impressed.

Day 6: A Perfect Ending

Our final morning featured an easy 6 mile stroll, mostly following the gentle Hoff Beck into Appleby-in-Westmorland. We arrived with just ten minutes to spare before catching our 9:47 train northward to Carlisle before heading to London.

During our brief stop in Carlisle, hunger led us to discover 'Pie Demand' – a platform stall selling freshly-baked pastries from their bakery in the station arches. What began as a search for sandwiches ended with us devouring hot pasties on the platform, followed by sharing what a Google reviewer accurately described as a sausage roll you'd 'struggle to find better anywhere'. A fitting culinary conclusion to our adventure before the train carried us homeward.

Final Reflections

Winter walking in the Dales offered unique challenges and rewards. While the cold winds made lengthy food stops outdoors uncomfortable (making calorie intake somewhat challenging), the quieter trails and excellent accommodation availability more than compensated. The route certainly felt longer than its official 89 miles, but the stunning landscapes, historical features, and warm local hospitality made every step worthwhile.

The rail connections worked flawlessly throughout our journey, offering excellent value for money and convenient access points to this spectacular trail. For fellow walkers considering this route, we particularly recommend Kate's Shepherds Cottages near Ribbleshead and the Three Greyhounds in Great Asby for exceptional hospitality. And should your journey take you through Carlisle station, don't miss what might be the best sausage roll in Britain!

THE THREE CHOIRS WAY – 17 TO 21 FEBRUARY 2025

From David Thornton

In January 2017 I set about completing my first ever OS mapped waymarked trail, the Fox Way, a 40 mile circular route in Surrey. I vividly remember this trail for a number of reasons, none more so than the contents of what was also my very first overnight rucksack. What would seem rather puzzling items now included – and this is all genuine – a pair of heavy jeans, leather belt, woolly jumper, leather trainers and a very large bath towel (the purpose of which was simply to pack out my cavernous rucksack). It also included, would you believe, a large bottle of aftershave. I'm not entirely sure what my intentions were at the Godalming branch of JD Wetherspoons on that Friday night, but I do know I spent the whole evening alone. Perhaps I chose the wrong aftershave?! I've often joked about this first pack with some of my walking friends, suggesting that the only things I didn't manage to cram in were a crystal decanter and a large cuddly toy – although in hindsight, a lightweight cuddly toy would perhaps have been more practical than the heavy bath towel.



I keep a log of all my trails and in January 2025 I realised that I had just completed my 99th trail, the Diamond Way in the Cotswolds. So, I came up with the idea of marking my 100th trail, by completing a trail which was 100 miles long. According to the very latest Long Distance Path library on the LDWA website, there are 562 waymarked trails, so I didn't think finding one which was 100 miles would prove too tricky. The obvious choice would have been the South Downs Way, but that was completed back in 2018. Luckily for me there was just one other, officially advertised as being 100 miles long, which was the Three Choirs Way. Result. And in an area I hadn't walked before.

The Three Choirs Way is a circular route linking the three cathedrals at Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester and more specifically the ancient music festivals which still take place annually at all three locations. I set off to catch the 5.40 am train from West Malling, arriving in Gloucester at 9.15, ready for my first day, a 20 mile stint to get to Much Marcle. Apart from the obvious excitement of the first day of a trail, the day was relatively uneventful, although a realisation that a very muddy walk was ahead of me became quite apparent. Much Marcle is a pretty village, but with the unfortunate tag of being the birthplace of the notorious serial killer, Fred West, as one of the locals informed me.

The following morning I left to a cold and crisp day, with a bit of light frost, just enough to keep the ground a bit firmer under my feet. A mile outside Much Marcle is the enormous Henry Weston's Cider Mill. After I'd completed the walk on Friday afternoon, it seemed strange to me that this mill was clearly evidence that Herefordshire was a traditional producer of cider and yet I could



count on one hand the apple orchards I walked through on the whole trail and even those were very small. On their website they claim to use only single season apples grown in Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, so perhaps I just didn't walk through the right places. The highlight of this day was the walk across Marcle Hill. A ridge about two miles long and not particularly high, but on a clear day such as this, I could just make out the Black Mountains in Wales to the west and the Malvern Hills ridge to the east. I arrived at Hereford around 2.00 pm and, after wandering around town for a short while, decided to treat myself to a Marks and Spencer *Best Ever* prawn sandwich, whilst sat in the peaceful grounds of the cathedral. It was very pleasant indeed.

I arrived in Barestree for my overnight stop at 5.00 pm, where, as part from my usual routine, I set about finalising my walking plans for the following day. My stop the following night was in Lower Blackheath and lucky for me it had a small but perfectly adequate community-run store. The

issue I had was that the shop shut at 4.30 pm and I had around 27 miles to complete. In circumstances like these, I tend to take on a bit of a challenge-event mentality, as it were, and treat the day as such. I was up and out at 4.45am, in the knowledge that I had around two hours to walk in the dark. Now, it would be fair to say that it has only been more recently that I have started to fully embrace the OS maps app on my phone and certainly at times like this it is worth its weight in gold. I still carry all paper maps for my trails and avidly follow them, but what I have found, as I am sure many other users have, is that the occasional checking of your exact location via the app enables you maintain a good momentum. Indeed, there were one or two head-scratching moments between 4.45 am and 7.00 am and it just provided that safety net, enabling me to keep moving forward. It's a wonderful tool. Rather tiredly, I walked into the shop at 4.10pm, grabbed my provisions, before heading across the road to stay at a very welcome self-contained Airbnb.

There was rather a lot of rain overnight, falling on what was already pretty saturated ground. Again, I left in good time, passing Edward Elgar's birthplace and arriving in Worcester around 9.00 am after 4 miles of walking. I decided to grab a bench in the grounds of the cathedral for breakfast, before setting off on what would turn out to be a difficult morning underfoot. The 3 miles or so along the River Severn were not too bad, although it was clear to see that the story could have been very different, if the wrong week had been picked. The river level was around 6 ft below me, but it was obvious, judging by the silt and debris, that it had, at some point this winter, been at my now waist level and impassable. But it was the bit between the River Severn and Malvern which was so surprisingly challenging. Quite simply, it was just a 6 mile mud-fest, all the way to



Malvern. I got there around lunch time and slumped on a bench in a lovely memorial park at the top of town. I have to say that once you get up to the old town on the hill, you can see why it is such a popular weekend destination. It is lovely.

I was really looking forward to my afternoon of walking, as this was going to be along the main Malvern Hills ridge. After a steep climb up to the top of North Hill, the route then turns south and goes over a further six hills: Summer, Perseverance, Pinnacle, Black, Millennium and Hangman's. It was like walking along an inland equivalent of the Seven Sisters on the south coast, with, despite some heavy showers, wonderful panoramic views. According to one of Helen's neighbours, who used to live in the area and regularly walked them, on a clear day, you can see seven counties from the peaks of the Malverns. I felt quite disappointed when I finally had to drop down as I headed for my overnight stay in Hollybush.

I had a train to catch at 2.10 pm on the Friday and with 17 miles to complete, I was up and back on the trail by 6.00 am. Again, there had been some rain overnight and parts of the route were completely sodden and it was quite tough going at times. But I arrived back in Gloucester in good time, to have a brief wander around the cathedral, before grabbing my train. I was back home by 6.00 pm, in plenty of time to get showered, before raising a traditional and very large gin and tonic. 'Another trail bites the dust' as I always say to Helen when we raise that celebratory glass – but this was a slightly special one. 'Health permitting, here's to the next 100'.

6TH ANNUAL 100 KM DU LOIRET

From Cathy Waters

When this event popped up on Sarah Turner's radar in January she asked whether Nicola Foad and I would be interested in doing it. We were only too happy to have the opportunity for another *randonnée* in France. What could be nicer than walking in the Sologne, part of the magnificent Loire Valley, in Spring? Five routes were on offer: 100 km, 75 km, 50 km by day or by night, and 25 km. Sarah wanted to train for the Flower of Suffolk and registered for the 100 km route. Nicola and I opted for the 50 km by day.

The departure point – the village of Ménestreau en Villette – unfortunately had no public transport connections available; so the three of us decided to stay at a hotel near the station in Orléans beforehand and pre-book return taxis from there. This worked very well using an app called GetTransfer.com. We paid £111 for a return trip (2 x 31 km) which turned out to be cheaper than hiring a car – and we didn't have to worry about driving or finding somewhere to park.



100 km du Loiret
29 et 30 mars 2025
Départ toutes distances le samedi 29 mars 2025
de Ménestreau en Villette 45240



5 parcours, tous en allure libre
• **100 km - 75 km - 50 km - 25 km :**
départ à 12 h
• **Nouveau: 50 km départ de 18 h à 24 h**

<http://100kmduloiret.asptt.com>

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Orléans is the city of Joan of Arc, and we spent the Friday afternoon sightseeing, discovering the many statues and paintings dedicated to the legendary Maid of Orléans. Our favourite was a modern sculpture made from recycled metal located near the station. We visited the magnificent Cathédrale Sainte-Croix with its chapel dedicated to St Joan and ten stained-glass windows depicting her life, as well as the beautiful Hôtel Groslet built with Sologne bricks in the Renaissance style.

On the Saturday morning, we arrived at the Maison des associations in good time for the 12 noon start, slightly disappointed that the promised food truck for pre-departure lunch turned out to be a *friterie*. With an astonishing 1000 participants registered for the event, the departures were to be staggered, with different starting pens allocated for each distance at a nearby stadium. We bid Sarah *bonne chance* when she left in the first group. We set off around 12.15.

The routes were extremely well sign-posted, with forks between the different routes clearly marked and road-crossings also flagged for caution. We had a bit of road walking to get out of the village, but thereafter we were on flat forest tracks and footpaths virtually the whole way. The woodlands are mainly of oak, pine and chestnut, with many ponds and marshes scattered throughout. Apparently

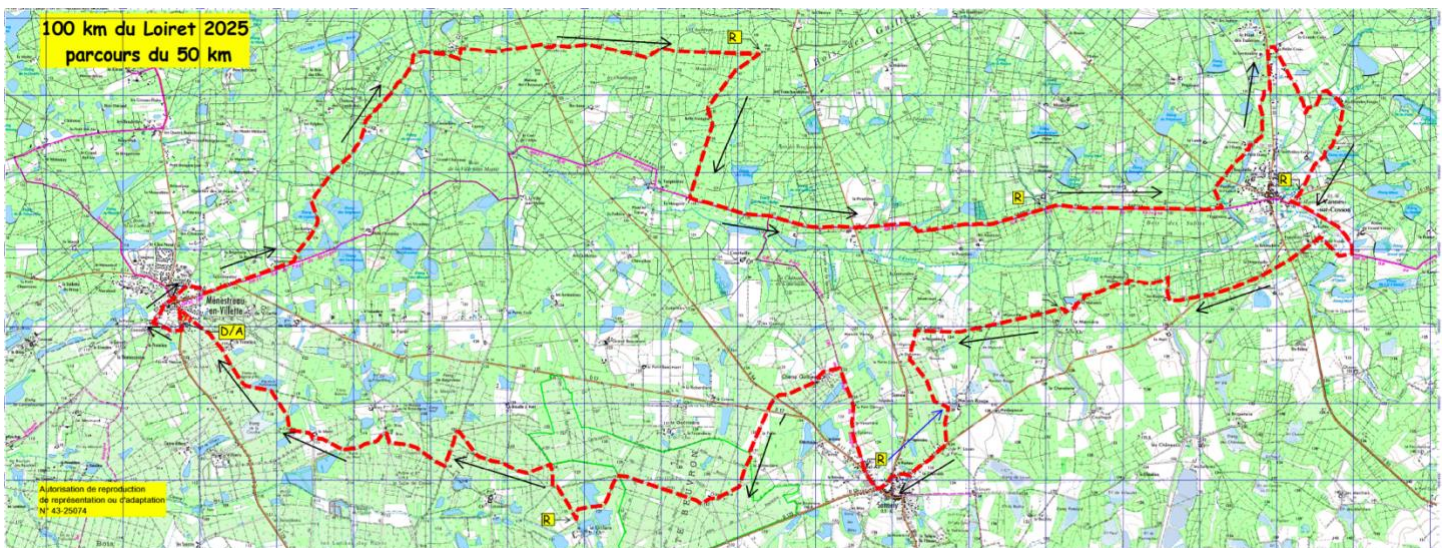


the Sologne was a royal hunting region in the middle ages.



There were no checkpoints along the route: walkers were not allocated numbers, no records were kept of arrival times and we were simply checked off the list of entrants at the end. Instead, there were five refreshment stops on the 50 km route, although all of them were outdoors – so no toilets and minimal seating available for resting weary feet! I don't know how they would have managed the refreshments if it had been raining.

The snack food provided was very good: small slices of artisanal bread spread with paté, a range of cheeses cut into portions – brie, camembert, and Emmental – ham, fruit cake, patisserie-made coconut biscuits, slices of fresh orange and apple, dried apricots and prunes. Black tea or coffee, orange juice and water were also in plentiful supply. But snacks are not really enough to sustain you on a 50 or 100 km walk! Nicola and I were glad we had taken the precaution of purchasing a baguette each beforehand and we ate these at the fourth refreshment stop at around 18.30. We had been hoping to have a hot meal at the end when we arrived just before 22.00, but found only snacks again, alas!



Walking on such a flat route in fine weather, we all made good time – notwithstanding a few marshy sections of deep mud. Nicola and I finished in just under 10 hours (with a mean moving speed of 3.5 mph according to my GPS) and Sarah in under 18. My outer toes on each foot certainly felt tenderised by the speed. All in all, it was a really enjoyable challenge event. We're looking forward to our next French walking adventure!

SAVE THE DATE – Sunday 8 June 2025

From Helen Strong

As is now the new tradition, we will be once again hosting our summer social event for members of the Kent Group at Ryarsh Village Hall, on Sunday 8 June.

This event has been popular with the membership, a time when we can get together to celebrate the successes of those who have recently completed the 100 and catch up with other members of the group.

As in previous years, the day will begin with a short walk of about 7.5 - 8.5 miles (2.5 - 3mph) led by David, followed by a 'bring-a-dish' buffet lunch – where we all bring something for us to share and enjoy with others.

Further details of the day will follow by email, but any questions in advance, please contact myself (helenldwa@gmail.com) or David (david.thornton1011@hotmail.com).



Another stunning photo from 'Winterhurst', taken by Kate Copeland