

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION – Kent Group

furthering the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking

NEWSLETTER



Hunnypot Social Walk 8, 22 February 2026, photo courtesy of David Spring

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WELCOME to the April 2026 edition of the Kent Group Newsletter. In this issue we have a report on the annual Sevenoaks Circular Challenge, together with accounts of walking adventures by Kent Committee members at home and abroad.

Peter Jull has been leading social walks of sections of the forthcoming Hunnypot 100 and a photo taken during the walk of section 8 appears on our cover. Planning for the event continues. Please contact Peter if you are able to help.

Cathy Waters

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KENT LDWA AGM SOCIAL WALK 2026

The ‘Short’ Walk to the AGM: Mud, Mist and Many Puddles

By David Spring



Leading a ‘short’ social walk sounds easy on paper, but the real challenge is the math: how do you keep a pack of eager hikers slow enough to reach Godmersham Village Hall exactly for when lunch is ready? As Peter advised, the goal is to walk at *my* pace, not yours – though ‘my pace’ quickly became ‘whatever pace keeps us upright’.

The Pre-AGM Swamp Check

A few days before the AGM, I headed out for an additional recce. After a week of relentless rain, I wasn't looking for paths; I was looking for navigable waterways. I managed to get around, but the conditions had 'deteriorated' – which is hiker-speak for 'bring a snorkel'.

Kick-off: Grey Skies and Whisky Sighs

The morning of the AGM was a classic Kent winter day: grey, damp, and promising more rain by 11:00. Naturally, I arrived at Godmersham 20 minutes early expecting to be the first, only to find a crowd already sorting kit and chatting. We had four non-starters: three with illnesses and one who had apparently been defeated by a late-night battle with a bottle of whisky and a haggis (Sarah, you're getting soft!). To balance the scales, we gained two unannounced keen hikers and a dog.

The 'Sub-3mph' Struggle

After a quick briefing (Translation: 'It's muddy, don't drown'), we tackled the first uphill climb towards Hastingleigh. It was a perfect warm-up, though I spent most of it obsessively checking my watch to ensure we stayed under the dizzying speed of 3mph. We paused for a group photo overlooking the Crundale valley – but only after a coordinated 'limbo' session under an electric fence. If there's anything more graceful than a group of LDWA walkers ducking under live wires, I haven't seen it.



Tactical Wading and 'The Peter Manoeuvre'

After passing St Mary's Church, we met our first true hurdle: a stretch of standing water that looked more like a lake. Most of the group opted for a delicate, off-camber crawl along the muddy bank at the side. Peter, however, decided on a bold frontal assault straight down the middle. He made it but there was definitely hesitation as the water became progressively deeper.

The Great Divide

The wooded sections were less of a walk and more of a rhythmic water-filled rut hop, as we bounced from side to side trying to avoid wet feet. Unfortunately, the conditions started to take their toll. Mike was finding the steep, slippery inclines a bit much, so Neal came to the rescue and volunteered to lead him back via a more direct, low-level route.

The rest of us continued our slithering. Rob even tried an 'off-piste' excursion into a neighbouring field, hoping for firmer ground. (Spoiler: There

wasn't any).

Traffic Jams in the Middle of Nowhere

For such a remote route, it was surprisingly busy. First, we ran into a large group of walkers coming the other way – Cathy said they were the Canterbury Ramblers, a number of whom she knew. Then, the silence was shattered by a thundering herd of motorcyclists. To their credit, they slowed down and gave us a polite nod as we hovered on the verge, looking like very damp statues.

The Reward

After some quad-burning downhill sections and a trek through Crundale village, we hit the home stretch. The Stour Valley views were expansive, the mud was (finally) behind us, and we hopped over one last stile to reach the hall.



We walked through the doors just in time for a hearty and well deserved lunch, prepared by Penny, Helen, and David. Managing a group with such a mix of abilities is a workout in itself, but despite the ruts and the rain, I'd do it all again. Hope you all enjoyed the slide!

SAND, GRIT AND LIMESTONE TRAILS, 2-8 FEBRUARY 2026

By David Thornton

During the peak of the 1990s supermodel era, Linda Evangelista (not Naomi Campbell as is widely thought) famously said, during an interview with *Vogue*, that she wouldn't get out of bed for less than \$10,000.00 a day.



Whilst I appreciate that I am somewhat stretching this analogy to its uppermost limits, I generally wouldn't get out of my bed in Kent and travel north of Birmingham to do a trail of less than, say, 65 miles. Therefore, I am always looking at ways that I might be able to link a few shorter waymarked trails in one trip. I'd had my eye on these three trails for some considerable time, despite not actually being linked at all. However, I was attracted to the overall theme of these trails and after some lengthy research decided that logistically they were doable in one hit. The Sandstone, Gritstone and Limestone Trails are 32, 34 and 46 miles respectively.

So, on Monday 2nd February, the day after the Kent AGM, with a plan to do them in order of west to east, I set off by train for Whitchurch in north Shropshire via Crewe, to start the Sandstone Way. Bearing in mind during January we'd experienced more than double the average monthly rainfall, this trail was about as perfect as you could get. Fields, which in Kent would be clogged

in clay, were so well drained, that in parts you wouldn't even have known there had been any meaningful rain at all.

The highlight of this first day was climbing and walking along the top of Bickerton and then Peckforton Hill and with leafless trees at this time of year, the views both west and east were stunning. Well, I say this was the highlight of the day – actually the real highlight was arriving at Peckforton Castle for my overnight stay. Imagine walking into the walled grounds of Leeds Castle to book into your room and you get the picture. It was dark, but amazingly lit, almost like walking into a film set. I half imagined the receptionist uttering the words 'Good evening, Mr Bond', but apart from being dressed all in black, that was where any resemblance ended. The overnight was quite an experience and surprisingly good value for money.

As you leave Peckforton Castle, you cross a half-mile valley bottom to pass Beeston Castle, perched on another high outcrop of rock. Unlike Peckforton Castle, this is non-functioning and now part of English Heritage. As you head away from the two castles and look back into the distance, they really are an impressive sight and I dare say were an imposing obstacle for any aspiring invader. The second half of this route takes you through Delamere Forest and then Overton Hill, the latter of which I walked during the North Cheshire Way, before dropping down into Frodsham. Here I caught a train to Kidsgrove, via Chester and Crewe, where the southern end of the Gritstone Trail starts.

Thinking back to the three trails, were I forced to pick one, I would say that the Gritstone Trail was the most scenic of the three, so it's a shame that my two days



on this trail were rather blighted by poor weather. On the first day it wasn't so bad, just foggy, which was frustrating, given the potential views from the top of Mow Cop and The Cloud, the latter of which certainly lived up to its name. I then had a long stretch along Wincle Minn, at the end of which I grabbed a taxi into Congleton for my overnight stay.



Top of The Cloud Viewing Point

It was a different story on day two. It is very rare for me to wake up on the morning of a walk really not looking forward to it. In fact, the last time I had that feeling was on day five of my Pennine Way Walk, between Malham and Ribbleshead, in 2021. This second day of weather on the Gritstone Trail certainly eclipsed that. Even my friendly taxi driver was peering at me in his rearview mirror with a



Top of Cave Dale Moor

bemused smile and shaking his head when I explained I was attempting 17 miles.

With the route remaining generally high and exposed all the way to Disley, where it finished, the sleet, snow, hail and rain, along with a north-easterly wind ranging from 40-50mph, hammered me throughout the day. It really was a challenge to keep going at times, especially as my direction of travel was generally north, north-east into the weather. I was mightily relieved to reach my Airbnb in New Mills late in the day. On the rare occasions I was able to peer out of my hood, I caught the landmarks of Tegg's Nose, White Nancy and Lyme House. It really could have been a spectacular day of walking. There aren't many trails I would consider repeating, but with the prospect of the weather being finer, this is certainly one of them. The Swizzells Sweets factory is in New Mills. Considering the day I'd had, I don't know why, but that rather put a smile on my face.

Having caught my train from Disley to New Mills the night before, I was up and away early the following morning to catch the 7.20 train from New Mills Central to Edale. As soon as I stepped off the train at Edale, it started to rain, heavily. It was a two mile walk over Hollins Cross and then down the other side to Castleton, where the Limestone Trail officially starts. A wonderful bit of walking, on any other day. The trail then climbs through Cave Dale and pretty much remains high for most of the day, with the

exception of the drop down and through Hay Dale, which was very pleasant. The day's walk ended with an enjoyable trudge alongside the river Bradford, to Youlgrave, where I stayed at the Farmyard Inn.

The following morning, I left at 7.30 and about a mile or so out turned round to look at Youlgrave from high up. As it slowly disappeared behind me, so did everything else in front, as a thick fog and drizzly rain set in for the whole day. Mid-afternoon, after 18 miles, I turned off the trail at Tissington and took the three mile walk into Ashbourne, along the disused rail line called the Tissington Trail. Ashbourne is a very pleasant small town and I had a lovely warm and comfortable flat, overlooking the town square. It was just what I needed.

The following morning I took a taxi back to Tissington, which is a quaint little village and completed the last eight miles to finish the trail at Rocester, home of the JCB manufacturing company. Rocester also happens to be the location for the



Top of White Nancy

world's very first water-powered cotton mill, built by Richard Arkwright in 1771 and which now impressively serves as the JCB engineering academy. I had considered walking the additional three miles from Rocester to Uttoxeter to catch the train, but the only walkable route was along the River Dove and not surprisingly this had completely burst its banks filling the whole flood plain. So I was forced to take another taxi. On a Sunday, trains only leave Uttoxeter at 15.07 and 16.07, so it was a late return home.

Despite the rain, generally inclement weather and being quite exhausted at the end of it, I really enjoyed my seven days of walking these trails. Strangely, the poor weather causes the walk to become even more etched in your memory. I certainly won't forget it. I'm going to finish here by recognising some items of clothing. Despite all the rain, hardly a drop of water got through my Montane Waterproof Pac Plus XT jacket nor my Berghaus



Stormcloud Waterproof over trousers. They certainly earned their keep this week. But the biggest ‘shout out’ must go to my Meindl Peru boots. A whole seven days of relentless water and mud and not a jot of moisture got through. Now that, I would say that, is pretty impressive.

INGRESS PROTECTION MATTERS ...

By Jim Briggs

Despite the driving rain, I was doing OK on the White Cliffs 50 last year. This was until, in the middle of night, I was midway across the field before Covert wood when my headlight flashed brightly twice and then refused to do anything other than a low power glow. I did find that as long as other people were around me, I could complete the walk and did not resort to my tiny reserve light. On a later Social Walk, I discovered that I was not alone in experiencing this problem on the White Cliffs.

A few days after the event, I consulted the internet to see if this was a known fault – yes it was and other users diagnosed that the headlamp was wet and the solution was to dry it. This had me confused as I had bought a costly Petzl light that according to Petzl’s suggestion was suitable for hiking in all weathers. I then looked at the specification in detail of the lamp – it was rated IPx4. I kicked myself – in my younger days, I had designed effluent plants and would never have considered placing anything with an IPx4 rating outdoors.

All electrical equipment should have an IP rating and this is usually quoted somewhere. The standard is set by an international organisation and means Ingress Protection ([Ingress Protection \(IP\) ratings](#)). The first digit is the degree of protection from solids and the second digit water. For my Petzl headlamp the x in the rating means it was not rated for solids and only rated ‘4’ for water.

IEC Making electrotechnology work for you.

Ingress protection (IP) ratings guide

IP ratings are represented by combining the first and second digits of the below columns

1 st numeral - solid foreign objects		2 nd numeral - water	
0	No protection	0	No protection
1	Protected against solid foreign objects of 50 mm Ø and greater	1	Protected against vertically falling water drops
2	Protected against solid foreign objects of 12.5 mm Ø and greater	2	Protected against vertically falling water drops when enclosure tilted up to 15°
3	Protected against solid foreign objects of 2.5 mm Ø and greater	3	Protected against spraying water
4	Protected against solid foreign objects of 1.0 mm Ø and greater	4	Protected against splashing water
5	Dust-protected	5	Protected against water jets
6	Dust-tight	6	Protected against powerful water jets
Example: IP 65 Protected against water jets Dust-tight		7	Protected against the effects of temporary immersion in water
		8	Protected against the effects of continuous immersion in water
		9	Protected against high pressure and temperature water jets

My conclusion is that I need a new headlamp that has a rating for water 5 or better i.e. IPx5 is ok. Industrially, I tended to look for things that were IP68 as I knew they would be fine. My New Zealand ‘made’ garden lighting is IP68 and of course New Zealanders are experienced in rain (the Maori people call it the land of the long cloud). I guess it is buyer beware and look at the small print when buying electrical and electronics for outdoors. Maybe Petzl have never tried their lamp for long periods in the rain – their IPx4 rated lamp is not suitable.

WALKING THE MARY TOWNELEY LOOP OF THE PENNINE BRIDLEWAY AND THE BURNLEY WAY – 11 TO 16 JANUARY 2026

By Helen Strong

This January we completed a six-day walk in the South Pennines, combining the Mary Towneley Loop of the Pennine Bridleway (PBW) with the Burnley Way. The former we won't need to include when we tackle the main PBW and the latter as a bolt on to the short loop. It also gave us the chance to revisit some sections of the Calderdale Way and the Todmorden Centenary Trail we



completed a couple of years ago, which we enjoyed.

We travelled up by train to Hebden Bridge on the Sunday staying in a self-contained Airbnb, as we did every night on this trip. This is our preference as it allows us to start early each morning without the rigmarole of a guesthouse breakfast.



It was a drizzly, dark Monday morning as we left the flat to catch a bus which would drop us a couple miles down the Calder Valley to the start of the route. We had 22 miles to cover that day and were glad to get on the route as we soon climbed steeply up and over Heptonstall Moor. Being up high, we took some shelter from the wind behind a cottage as we ate our breakfast, and we could see the rain closing in on us so made the decision to don the waterproof trousers. We continued in the blustery rain which lifted enough for us to stop for a late morning snack – but just as we set off the rain began again, got heavier, and continued throughout the afternoon.

Jill Green told us we would see the Mary Towneley memorial, but no horses on the PBW – she was correct about the first, as not long after we passed the memorial the route joined the Rossendale Way and we met a young lady on horseback, who was interested in our walk. I asked her whether people actually ride the Pennine Bridleway – yes, she said, she had done it – but there are only a few places to stay.

It was getting dark as we reached our destination of Edgeside. However, we struggled to find our accommodation on the road where it was supposed to be. Up and down the road we went, asking locals. The host had not given particularly detailed instructions – and being a new build – it was not on Google maps, but we got there in the end.

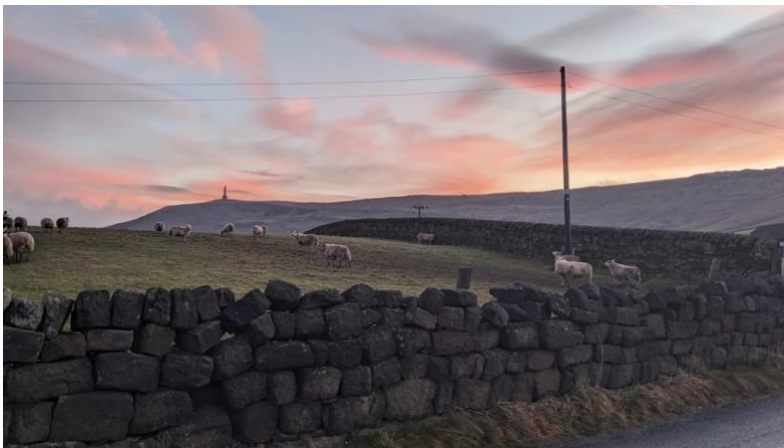
Tuesday began with a steep climb out of Edgeside and up onto Cowpe Moss and round the Top of Leach at 474m. The day was cold and very windy on the high ground, though clear enough to see the less than scenic tower blocks of Rochdale in the distance – at least it was not raining. We passed a group of school children out for a walk on Rooley Moor, all sensibly kitted out – what a lovely way to spend a winter school day we thought – though not all the children looked to be enjoying themselves. The afternoon was full of sunshine, and we could see Manchester from the memorial woods where we stopped for lunch near Watergrove reservoir. We were staying in Walsden, having covered about 17 miles and it became apparent that this accommodation was hosted by the same person as the night before – but this house was much easier to find!



We were up and out early the next morning and had about seven miles to complete the Mary Towneley Loop. The



morning took in sections of the Calderdale Way and Todmorden Centenary Trail that we had walked a couple of years ago. We sheltered for breakfast in the grounds of the Mankinholes YHA, currently being renovated, with the old bunk bed frames stacked in the car park. I hope that when it reopens it will remain accessible to individuals rather than being reserved solely for group bookings, but I doubt it. A pleasant morning followed walking under the shadow of Stoodley Pike and down the Pennine Way – noting the Spine Race fluorescent markers in the woods – still there from the weekend – which brought back memories. We were soon back to the start of the walk and took a bus back to Hebden Bridge Station, to catch the train to Burnley to begin the Burnley Way. We completed about 8 miles and then attempted to get a taxi from Cornholme, rather than wait for a bus back to Burnley. It was bitterly cold. There is nothing worse than feeling the cold creep into your body after you have been moving – so we were not pleased that the taxi took far longer to appear than promised, but grateful when it arrived.



That night I pre-booked an Uber, hoping it would be more dependable than the local taxi firm, so we could get an early start. We were up at 5 – and the Uber driver did not let us down. We headed up out of Cornholme in the dark and somehow lost the path – we should have walked back a bit and picked it up but ended up taking a parallel route on another footpath through Pudsey Clough. The weather today was much better than earlier in the week. We picked up sections of the PBW we had walked in the opposite direction on Monday, but this felt like an entirely different route. Around lunchtime we passed through a horse sanctuary. There is a café which had amazing views over Burnley and helps raise funds – but we soon found a bench in the sun for our rolls and donated what we would have spent on coffee and cake to the charity.

On our final day we had about 13 miles to cover to finish the Burnley Way and make it to the station to catch the 13.23 train. We started early in the dark and it was raining again and we headed up the river/canal in the wrong direction, so had to track through suburban Burnley to get back on course. As the rain let up, we enjoyed the rest of the route albeit for one section of woodland – which was horrifically deep with mud. The conditions got better as we headed up towards Hameldon Hill before the long descent back towards the station. We ended up doing 15.5 mi – and that last couple of miles at pace – as we were worried about missing the train.

We found it quite tough walking in the wet winter condition in this part of the world. The ascents and descents can be quite a challenge; but more than this, we found that although we were well clothed, and fed, by the time it got to 4pm we were feeling quite tired and clearly fatigued and felt cold to the bone. We were always so glad to get into the accommodation in the evening. With this loop now completed, we are looking forward to planning our more substantial walk on the Pennine Bridleway.



FRENCH ALPS – COMBLOUX EXPEDITION 2026

By Jim Briggs

I hope readers enjoyed the account of last Summer's trip to the French Alps in the December issue of the Kent Group Newsletter. Sarah, David Spring, Dr Clare and their partners all enjoyed the walking. Sheila and I enjoyed having the company. Details of the walks that we did are in the Newsletter article. All were walkable from the chalet.



We are able to offer the same accommodation this year. I just had a decision from daughter-in-law that no dates from mid-June through July are blacked out for them to use the chalet, so I am free to use it. Sheila and I are definitely going on a trip there and I am thinking any time after, say, 14th June up through July. We are fairly flexible. I do have a one day photographic course on 7th July, so I would like to go either side of that.

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. One does get used to the climb and it is a great way to get aerobically fit!

The chalet has five bedrooms. Three double with ensuite facilities, a fourth double and the children's room with two sets of bunk beds and another bathroom. It also has a large lounge, dining area, kitchen, TV room, indoor swimming pool with

current machine, jacuzzi, sauna (with shower etc), gym, terrace and garage with electric car charger. It is fully equipped with bed linen, towels, crockery, cutlery, barbeque, washing machine, dryer etc. There is WiFi, USB outlets, TVs, telescope, table football, table tennis, retro games console etc. All built to a high standard.

The chalet is owned by my son and daughter-in-law, who had it built three years ago. It has to be let out on a commercial basis, but please ignore the rates. The out of pocket costs are VAT, local taxes, agent's fees, utilities and cleaning, so a contribution of Euro 100 per night for a couple and Euro 60 for single will help towards these.

The chalet is walking distance from the fashionable resort of Megeve and a short drive to Chamonix, which is very busy. The chalet can be reached by an 8-hour drive from the Channel, which is what I do; or by flying to Geneva and either taking a rental car or booking a car to the chalet (there is also a local bus to Combloux or rail to Sallanches). Travel by train to Sallanches is also possible, but complicated. Combloux has a bakery (very good!), butcher, a few shops and mini-supermarket. There is a bigger supermarket on the outskirts of Megeve. Other than to get to Chamonix or trying some new walking spots, it is possible not to need a car while there as I can do the supermarket runs. Last year, we took it in turns to cook a meal for the group, but we can do whatever suits everyone. We hope that you will consider joining us on this exciting trip: just let me know what dates you prefer. We will be booking a two week period, but last year people came for 3 to 8 days. No fixed plan at the moment; your choice.

Jim and Sheila
office@jamesbriggs.com

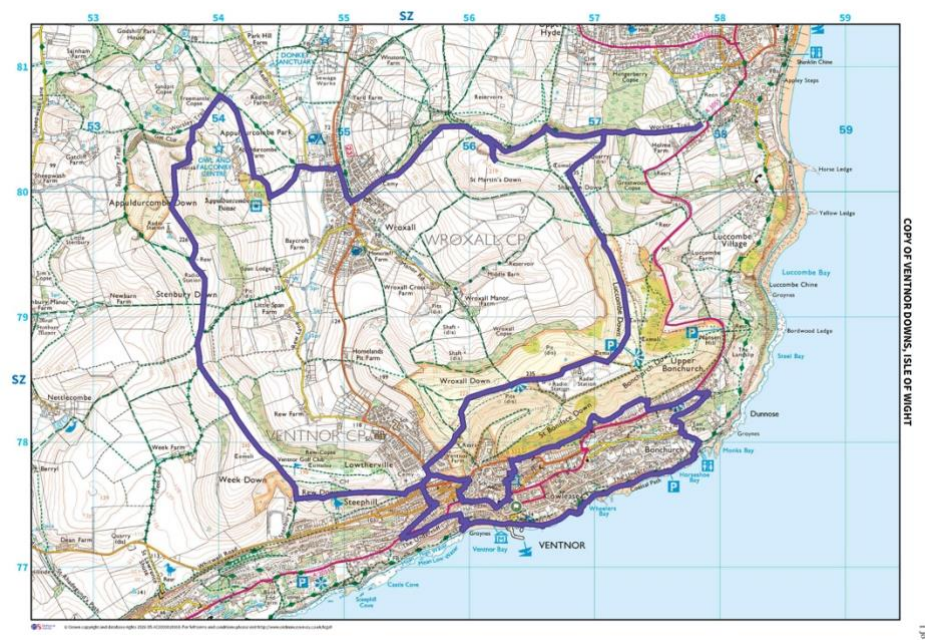


THE CHARLES DICKENS TRAIL – 28 FEBRUARY 2026

By Cathy Waters

Charles Dickens was a prodigious walker and was known on occasion to set out in the evening from the Wellington Street office of his periodical, *Household Words* (later *All the Year Round*), in London, and walk to his home at Gad's Hill, Higham, 30 miles away. Peter Ackroyd tells us in his biography of Dickens that it was quite common for him to walk 20 or 30 miles at a stretch. In his earlier years, it was 'the blowing off of superfluous energy', but in later life it became a way of warding off worries. Combatting restlessness in the 1850s, he declared to his friend and first biographer, John

Forster: 'If I couldn't walk fast and far, I should just explode and perish.' I imagine some LDWA members share the feeling.



Dickens's fondness for tramping through the Kent countryside is well known; but he was a compulsive walker wherever he went – and he travelled widely. Marking the 175th anniversary of Dickens's last visit to the Isle of Wight in 1849, a walking trail was created in 2024 a tribute to him. It was developed by the Isle of Wight Ramblers (including our own Jill Green) in conjunction with Ian Dickens, great-great grandson of Charles Dickens, and Island historian, Sue Lowday. The linear trail of 6.3 miles crosses the top of the downs between Shanklin and Ventnor, before descending into Ventnor, following along the seafront and ending in Bonchurch, where the Dickens family spent the summer in 1849. A leaflet for the trail is available at

<https://www.visitisleofwight.co.uk/things-to-do/walking/charles-dickens-trail>

As I was visiting the Isle of Wight for the inaugural Dickens House Party at the Royal Hotel, Ventnor, hosted by 'the Dickens Boys', Ian and Gerald, it was a good opportunity to walk the trail. Extending it at each end, I devised a circular route of just under 15 miles, which began by heading west from the Royal Hotel up onto the Downs above Ventnor. I found myself on a beautiful grassy ridge with fabulous views across to the chalk cliffs of Tennyson Down in the west and



Looking south-west towards Tennyson Down



Looking north-east towards Sandown

Sandown Bay to the north east. Passing a couple of radio masts, I made my way to the Worsley Monument on the top of Stenbury Down, before descending through the Freemantle Gate and passing the entrance to Appuldurcombe House to pick up some lunch in Wroxhall. Then it was up again contouring the edge of St Martin's Down along the Worsley Trail and descending to reach the start of the Dickens trail at St Blasius's Church.

Retracing my steps from St Blasius, I left the Worsley Trail to reach a trig point on Shanklin Down, which had fine views again – Tennyson Down to the west and Culver Down to the east. The trail then heads along Luccombe Down, passing three Bronze Age burial mounds, before turning onto a road that goes along the top of St Boniface Down (Dickens's daily climb while in Bonchurch) and finally descends to Upper Ventnor. The St Alban's steps lead down to the main town from here and the trail goes through Ventnor Park, a sheltered beauty spot between the sea and the south-facing slopes of the Undercliff. Passing my accommodation at the Royal Hotel, which has a blue plaque marking Dickens's stay there in 1838, the trail then descends to the esplanade and follows the coast path all the way to Monks Bay at Bonchurch.



The waterfall today

Here, I was delighted to see the waterfall, adjacent to The Waterfall Cottage, which Dickens had employed a local carpenter to adapt for his own use. As he wrote to his publisher, William Bradbury: ‘we have made all visitors in search of the Picturesque, mad, by putting up an immense wooden caravan on the Beach, to shut in a noble waterfall and convert it into – A Shower Bath! – with some five hundred feet of Fall. Which we take, every morning, to the unbounded astonishment of the aboriginal inhabitants.’ Heading up the cliff into Bonchurch village, the trail passes Winterbourne House – where the Dickens family stayed and Dickens wrote parts of *David Copperfield* – and then Hillside Cottage, where John Leech – Dickens’s friend and the illustrator of *A Christmas Carol* – was also holidaying. The trail finishes at Leeson Road, and I followed another footpath that contours along the base of St Boniface Down to get back to my starting point at the Royal Hotel. What larks!

SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR CHALLENGE EVENT 15 MARCH 2026

By David Thornton

The 49th Sevenoaks Circular Challenge took place on Sunday 15th March. For the first time since I took over the running of the event in 2019, I decided to run a route heading directly south into the Low Weald. I’d had the three distances planned for a couple of years now, but was hesitant to use them, as this area is notoriously muddy during the winter. Given the almost incessant rain we have endured this particular winter, the decision to run these routes in 2026 seemed, on the face of it, a little flawed, I would say.



Start of Marshals' Walk



Late night finishers on Marshals' Walk

This was very apparent during the weekend of the marshals walk on Sunday 1st March. Having rained heavily all week, it then proceeded to bucket down for the whole morning and early afternoon of the day itself. However, 9 hardy walkers ploughed their way around and still managed to have an enjoyable time, I think, despite the challenging conditions.

It was fortunate that in the two weeks leading up to the day of the main event, whilst we still had some rain, it wasn’t as frequent. It was also a little warmer and quite windy, which did a lot to take the worst out of the conditions. There were three distances again this year, 15, 20 and 30, going through check points at Chiddingstone Causeway and Ide Hill, with the 30 mile route going as far south as Penshurst Place.



Start of 20 and 30 mile walk



David Thornton and Keith Warman catering



Walkers heading towards CP1 at Chiddingstone Causeway

We had a total of 231 entrants and 37 people on the waiting list. 16 people cancelled between the closing day for entries and the day of the main event, but only 14 'no shows' on the day, which was very pleasing indeed. In the few short weeks leading up to the date that entries close, I do repeatedly ask for cancellations and this certainly helps to keep the 'no shows' to a minimum and of course gives those on the waiting list an opportunity to take part. So we had a total of 201 starters, which was 3 more than our record last year. Only 4 retirees this 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:

Car parking: Judy Rickwood and Andy Clark

Checking in team: Stephanie Le Men, Gwyneth Littlejohn

Check point 1 and 2: Marion Mueller, Clare Evans, Michael Headley, Eve Richards, Dave Sheldrake and Alan Stewart

Check Point 3: Nicola Foad, Jim Briggs, Andy Clark, Judy Rickwood and Cathy Waters

Finishing team: Stephanie Le Men and Gwyneth Littlejohn

Transport: Peter Jull

HQ catering: Helen Strong and Keith Warman

Route description checkers: Neal and Jan O'Rourke

It seemed clear to me that the overwhelming response from participants was very positive indeed. I certainly haven't had so many e-mails of gratitude from people who took part and I get the feeling the Kent Group as a whole is building a solid reputation for putting on good challenge events, with wonderful marshals

and good quality food. Here are just a very small selection from those I received.

Thank you so much for organising such a tough but thoroughly enjoyable event yesterday. I wanted to add how much I appreciate the wonderful catering Kent LDWA have always provided, both in the past and now. It's something that truly stands out and deserves recognition – so please let everyone know that their hard work is noticed and appreciated.

Thanks to you and your amazing volunteers for putting on yesterday's event. It was my first experience of Kent LDWA (and my daughter Ellen) and both enjoyed it tremendously. Lovely route / fantastic weather – hope to be back next year. Muddy conditions made it tough.



Late finishers proudly showing off certificates

Just wanted to again thank you for letting me bend the rules yesterday. Didn't run as quickly as I anticipated but still made it to the game just before half time. In case you were interested we were drawing 1-1 and won 3-1 so lucky I turned up. Also, a big thank you to all the people at the aid stations. The ham sandwiches at both were superb and everyone was super welcoming and helpful as always, please pass on my thanks to them also. I hope to see you again next year.

The 50th Sevenoaks Circular will be held on Sunday 14th March 2027. Three brand new routes, all starting from West Heath School. They will be routes befitting our 50th year.



Looking south towards Bough Beech Reservoir



Helen Strong and Stephanie Le Men finish the Marshals' Walk at 17.28

And some photos from the start of LDWA AGM walks A and C:

