

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION – Kent Group

furthering the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking

NEWSLETTER



LDWA President Phoebe Smith starts entrants in the Hunnypot 100, 23 May 2026, photo by Paul Cutmore

Number 129



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WELCOME to the August 2026 edition of the Kent Group Newsletter. There are reports in this issue on the Hunnypot 100, including the extraordinary heatwave conditions, as well as the Marshals' Event. We also have reports on walks undertaken by Kent LDWA members over the past few months. I am always pleased to receive these for inclusion. Please see my email address below.

Cathy Waters

KENT GROUP COMMITTEE

Chair	Peter Jull	kent@ldwa.org.uk
Secretary	Nicola Foad and Penny Southern	secretary.kent@ldwa.org.uk
Treasurer	Jim Briggs	treasurer.kent@ldwa.org.uk
Groups/Social Walks Organiser	Peter Jull	walks.kent@ldwa.org.uk
Newsletter Editor	Cathy Waters	c.watersparking@gmail.com
Membership Secretary	David Thornton	David.thornton1011@hotmail.com
Other Committee Members	Stephanie Le Men, Helen Strong, Sarah Turner	
Web Master (non-Committee)	Michael Headley	headlm01@hotmail.com

THE HUNNYPOT 100 MAIN EVENT

Kent LDWA had 12 entrants successfully complete this year's main 100 Challenge event: Samantha Atkins, Alzbeta Benn, Karen Bennett, David Booker, Debra Bourne, Felicity Elms, Scott Hahnefeld, Adriana Joyce, Edward Shelley, Ben Sigsworth, Eleanor Spooner and David Spring. Andrew Boulden and Helen Strong successfully completed the Marshals' event. Keith Warman reports that 10 of these finishers were completing their first hundred!

Commiserations go to the following starters who, for various reasons, were unable to complete the route this year: Edward Barnes, Phil Bradburn, James Briggs, Nicola Foad, Andrew Gordon, Laura Hill, Jonathan Richardson, Judy Rickwood, Laura Smith, Alan Stewart and Keith Warman.

The main event coincided with the first heatwave of the summer in the south east, with the event being dubbed the Hunny Hot 100 as a result. Checkpoint teams improvised brilliantly to help entrants cope with the heat, but despite their best efforts there was a record number of retirements, with a finishing rate of only 44.4%. Guy Evans has produced a graphic showing successive retirements (see page 3).

Comments on the HPH Facebook page from participants:

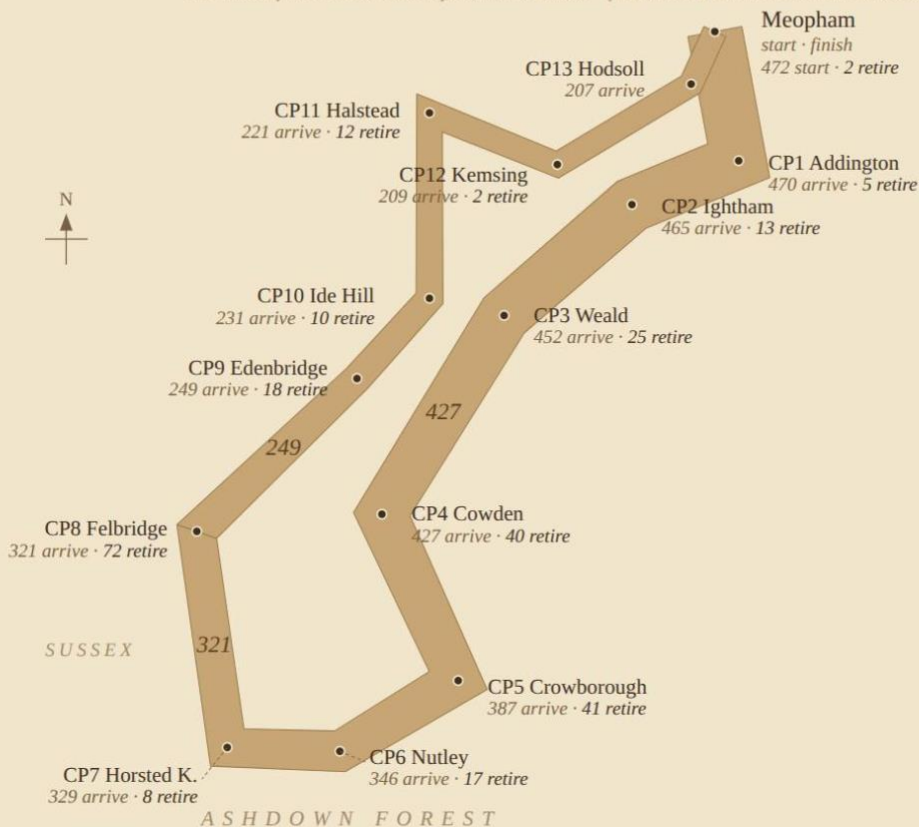


Figurative chart of the successive retirements on the LDWA Hunnypot 100 — May 2026

A 100-mile loop through Kent and the Ashdown Forest.

478 entered · 6 did not start · 207 finished · 265 retired en route.

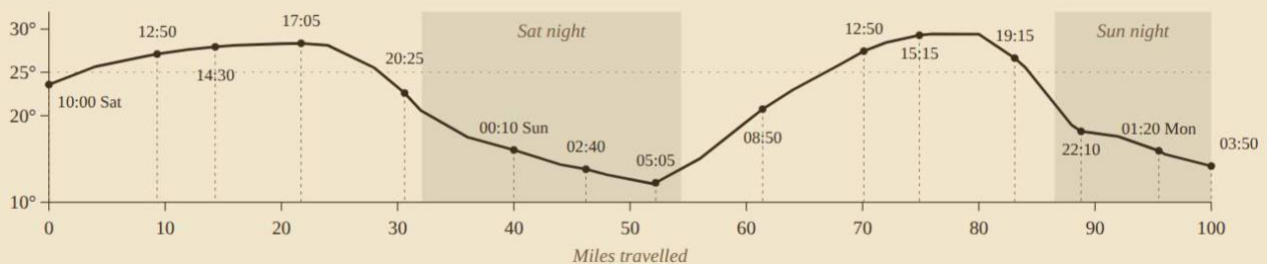
The width of the coloured zone represents the number of walkers still on the route at the named checkpoint.



"I always get to where I'm going by walking away from where I have been."

— Winnie-the-Pooh

Temperature and time of day at each checkpoint (median walker)



Inspired by Charles Joseph Minard, 1869. Sources: LDWA Hunnypot Hundred 2026; Track-Trail-Live finisher times; ERA5 reanalysis via Open-Meteo.

– Thank you to everyone involved! Thank you organisers, thank you volunteers, thank you participants. What a wonderful event! We were so well looked after, check point crew at every stop being supportive and encouraging as well as possibly enjoying chucking water over me a little too much 🤦🏻

– Kent - a big Winnie the Pooh thank you for organising this year's 100, and also thanks to the marshals and volunteers who made the whole thing possible, somewhat enjoyable and nearly endurable! I made it as far as Nutley, which given the conditions was plenty. I hope I wasn't channelling Eeyore too much at the end.

– Just wanted to say a huge, huge thank you to all the amazing people I met over this crazy hot 100 miles. Your kindness and support meant the world during the many, many highs and lows of the path!

Hope everyone is resting up and recovering 😊

– A huge thank you to all the wonderful marshals on the Hunnypot 100. Great support and welcome humour on a slightly warm weekend! You make events like this possible by generously giving up your time. All participants are extremely grateful for your efforts. Well done and enjoy a well-earned rest!



Helen Strong and Marion Mueller at HQ

– Huge thank you all round

Just want to share my deepest thanks to everyone involved in the event. From those who did all the planning, the spritely marshals at every CP and finally those who I shared parts of the trail with. Fantastic event and my first 100, feeling very blessed to have finished this morning and only have the continued support of others to thank.

See you next year... 😊

– A huge thank you to everyone involved in The Hundred this year. I loved the route, the company of other walkers and the care received at the start and checkpoints from all the wonderful volunteers. I retired early at cp 11 mainly due to a turned ankle so didn't get to the end, but still enjoyed and appreciated the whole experience. Now looking forward to The Jurassic Hundred!

– Thank You Marshals.

You did an amazing job over the weekend.

I for one felt you really wanted us to get round and went over and beyond to help us do just that. Cold neck cloths, Water hat and head dunks, Ice lolly and my fav an ice-cold paddling pool for feet cool off to mention just a few of the thing you did. And the constant welcome with a smile and offer of help to get what we needed at every checkpoint even when yourselves were enduring the heat in the checkpoints. You stars. Hope you're getting some well-earned rest now.

– A huge thank you to everyone involved in organising & supporting the

'Heatwave 100' 😊 over the weekend. The checkpoints were lifesavers.....ice, wet tea towels, paddling pools, water melon, ice lollies, Winnie the Pooh themed outfits and words of encouragement. We were looked after so well & I left each checkpoint feeling refreshed & okay(ish) for the next leg.

Thanks to the media team who kept popping up along the route – David, Simon and Andy... along with the lovely guy taking photos just before the checkpoints. You were all out in that heat for hours & hours.

For me, the heroes of the weekend were all the marshals and members of the check point teams. You're a credit to the LDWA. 😊
🙏

THE HUNNYPOT 100 MARSHALS' EVENT

By Stephanie Le Men

When Peter Jull asked for volunteers for the Hunnypot Hundred, I decided to take on the organisation of the Marshals' Event – held over the first May Bank Holiday (2–4 May) – drawing on my previous experience running the Cinque Port Hundred Marshals' Event. Jim Briggs, who is co-organising the High Weald event with me, immediately offered his help, although with hindsight he may have wished he hadn't... it turned out to be a *lot* of work!

We chose to use the same checkpoints and menus as the main event, treating the Marshals' weekend as a full test run to see how well this approach would work.

Securing a headquarters for the main event had already been challenging, and the Marshals' Event proved no different. Several nearby village halls and church halls – perfect in theory – declined our requests. Thankfully, we were able to book the Scout Hut, about a mile and a half north of the Leisure Centre (the main event HQ). Meopham Scouts were really helpful, and the location offered several advantages: a small car park plus ample on-street parking, space for walkers to camp behind the building, and less than a 10-minute walk from Meopham train station. The only disadvantages were that the location was hidden from the road and during the cooler night there was the classic battle between those who liked it hot and those who were feigning faints from the heat of the hot air blowers with no thermostat.



Entrants ready to leave

The route required only minimal changes compared to the main event. I produced two versions, both keeping the fantastic views at the start. Jim and Helen Strong recce'd them and unanimously voted for the flatter option: Helen declared that the route was already hilly



Crossing a valley at beginning of the Marshals Event

enough and certainly didn't need an extra climb!

Jim and I had a long list of tasks: finding volunteers for checkpoints and transport, organising food and delivery logistics, sorting equipment and managing trackers. It sounds simple, but it wasn't! Almost all the checkpoints were supplied by on-line orders with Sainsburys and some orders were revised four or five times as the team refined their view on menus. We were concerned that the drivers would have difficulty finding the checkpoints, particularly the Scout Hut. However, only one delivery needed telephone directions and the first critical delivery to the Scout Hut was no problem for an ex-scout driver, who remembered from forty years ago where it was. He also turned out to be Brian Buttifant's milkman before he drove for Sainsburys, so knew the LDWA. We were fortunate to receive advice and help from Katie Hunt (who organised the Flower of Suffolk Hundred), especially in finding volunteers.

We also spent several weeks recce'ing the route description to improve clarity. Andrew Boulden especially worked hard to improve it, and he also added reflectors for the night-time sections on many indistinct paths before the Marshals' event. During my recces, I loved the scenery. The ground was perfect – firm but not too hard – and I only found mud in one area. Ironically, the dry conditions leading up to the main event, after months of rain, made the paths treacherous, giving a slippery surface to rock-hard ground beneath when the rain arrived on Saturday night.

Almost 50 walkers initially registered, but injuries and illnesses reduced the number to 42. Among them was Michelle Armour, aiming for her 10th completion – spoiler alert: she achieved it!

On the Saturday of the event, a few of us arrived at the Scout Hut not so bright, but certainly early. Marion Mueller, Jim and I prepared equipment bags for the checkpoints. Jim switched on the trackers to ensure they were initialised in time. Peter and Alan Leadbetter directed walkers to the car park, while Sarah Turner kept everyone fuelled with tea and coffee. Walkers and supporters began to arrive. Sarah and I wore Winnie-the-Pooh hairbands, but the Heart of England team went all-out in full costume to cheer their friends. Completing a Hundred is difficult – especially a hilly one – but one walker decided to start late because he wanted to run a local parkrun beforehand... and he cycled to HQ too. Spoiler alert number two: he completed the event!



Ladies walking in the rain

Peter and I assembled the walkers a bit too early and then struggled to keep them waiting until the 10am start. I think we bored them thoroughly (the photos certainly suggest so!). The forecast was warm, with possible rain on Saturday evening. Once the walkers set off, we enjoyed a brief moment of calm – but not for long – dealing with tracker issues and liaising with checkpoints.

The first retiree came early. He hadn't felt well before the event but decided to start anyway, soon realising he couldn't continue. The forecasted rain arrived heavily over the Ashdown Forest, making paths extremely slippery. One walker fell and injured her back, retiring later. More walkers retired overnight and into Sunday – another hot day – due to the conditions and relentless climbs.

Thankfully, our Transport Team was exceptional: Alan Stewart, Judy Rickwood and her partner Andy, Nicola Burston, and Peter himself. They drove wherever needed without complaint.

The first walker back was Andrew Boulden. He had been affected by the lean for the last 30 miles and carried on regardless. Watching him walk the final few hundred yards – suffering but determined – supported by his friend Marta, was incredibly moving. Walkers continued to arrive gradually: some cheerful and showing no sign of having walked a Hundred in tough conditions, others exhausted, and several battling the dreaded lean.

One of the most emotional moments came when Rupert Connolly arrived, supported by his son. It was his first Hundred, and he was determined to finish despite a severe lean. When he reached HQ, both he and his son broke down in tears. I tried not to cry –



Helen Strong and Colin Utting arrive at CP 2

unsuccessfully – and when I looked over, Judy and Alan were crying too.

The final two walkers arrived well before the cutoff, accompanied by Claire Bass, who volunteered to sweep the last two sections – straight after returning from training for a major walking event in Yorkshire. I cannot thank her enough; her insistence on sweeping was instrumental in getting those walkers to the finish.

David Thornton did an amazing job feeding everyone as they arrived at HQ and offered a variety of options, including his bean stew. A few hours later, we all left the Scout Hut exhausted but relieved.

Jim and I are deeply grateful to all volunteers, who worked long hours and gave tremendous support throughout the weekend. This year, marshals were refunded travel and accommodation costs up to half the entry price – a well-deserved recognition.

Feedback was very positive. The route was judged tough but very scenic, and everyone praised the marshals. It is unfortunate that on the day of the main event, the start of the first heatwave made it one of the most challenging events in recent memory, with so many retirees.

If Alice had been an HPH Marshal ...

By Paul Glynn

(with apologies to A.A. Milne)

They're changing socks at Addington's palace.
Christopher (276), Robin (432) both walked past Alice.
Alice was tarrying there in the yard
'The ground hereabouts is terrible hard'
– says Alice.

They're changing socks at Crowborough's palace.
Christopher (276), Robin (432) had walked past Alice,
Dropping sticks from a bridge in a dark, dark wood
'The day was so hot that they didn't feel good'
– says Alice.

They're changing socks at the finishing palace.
Chris, Robin were applauded by Alice.
Survivors from heat and a hundred miles,
'What a great event! What beautiful smiles!'
– says Alice.

REPORT FROM POOH BRIDGE

By Gwyneth Littlejohn

I volunteered to be the marshal at Pooh Bridge handing out sticks. I was told walkers would not stop to play Pooh Sticks. They did.

I had collected suitable sticks a few weeks earlier. Armed with a bag of sticks, I arrived at Pooh bridge at 18.30 (Saturday) about 34.5 miles in on the Hunnypot 100 and 4.5 miles from the previous checkpoint at Cowden. I had a bit of a wait; I knew the walkers were not moving fast due to the heat. I was entertained by bird song. I know about the 'dawn chorus' but had not really experienced the 'dusk chorus'. I live in a town, too many external noises. Sitting in the woods on a fallen tree trunk in the quiet, I listened to an amazing melody of bird calls.

The first walker came through at 19.20. A runner, and yes, he wanted to play Pooh Sticks. For the next 30 minutes there was a slow but steady stream of solo walkers. And most wanted to play Pooh Sticks. Then came the groups of walkers. Some arrived saying they hadn't been able to find any sticks. I had sticks. Some arrived with a stick they had carried for over a mile. There are never any sticks at Pooh Bridge. Everyone uses them. I have been told that the local children collect sticks and sell them to visitors. Now that is initiative.



Andrew Boulden's triumphant finish



At Pooh Bridge

We played Pooh Sticks into the dark. People seemed pleased to stop for a few moments to have fun; probably a by-product of the heat. One walker threw his stick with some energy up stream; I don't think he had played Pooh Sticks before. It was a magical evening. At one point the bridge was full of walkers playing Pooh Sticks (I had not checked the weight limit). Walkers didn't seem to mind that it was dark and they could not see their sticks. They just claimed the first one through as theirs. Nor did they mind that the stream flow was worse than slow, though there were a few comments about being timed out if their sticks did not appear soon. I could have happily spent the night there but I had a shift back at HQ. I left at 10.30, leaving the remains of my sticks piled up by the bridge. I hope later walkers found them and enjoyed a game of Pooh Sticks.

I was pleased at the finish by how many walkers gave positive feedback and said how much they had enjoyed playing Pooh Sticks.

VOLUNTEER APPEAL

By Peter Jull

The Kent checkpoint for the Jurassic 100 will be at 40 miles in the village of Otterton, a few miles east of Sidmouth. CP6 is the village hall, open from 8pm Saturday to 5:30am Sunday. Veal & dumplings may not be on the menu but the What3Words location is [shops.veal.dumplings](https://www.what3words.com/?w3w=shops.veal.dumplings). Pacer will be in use. If you are able and willing to be part of the Kent team for part or all of the session, please submit names to walks.kent@ldwa.org.uk. A contribution towards expenses will be available.

A LOOK AT THE FIRST PART OF THE JURASSIC 100

By Peter Jull

Struggling to make a plan for a holiday, thoughts turned briefly to walking the Jurassic 100 route in stages before accepting that that was beyond my capacity at the moment. That thought then got combined with a thought about Kent playing away in the vicinity and they were to be in Bristol. So, a Saturday hike and Sunday cricket would make a weekend away. Parking/buses made a section around Kent's checkpoint at Otterton too short or too long so settled on the first two legs from Axminster to Lyme Regis and a bus back.

I met Emma 'The Route' in Axminster. Having parked actually on the route we walked the last half mile or so first and at the football club HQ entrance found a welcoming party of ducks. Now on the good starting footpath, that entrance will have funnelled down the crowd, to give any oncoming public a chance. Soon a main road is reached which will bunch the crowd again but the crossing has traffic lights with a long red phase to allow many to cross at once.

From the route outline on the Jurassic website, I had expected to turn onto a footpath here but that would have caused a kissing gate queue and it is a good plan to continue on a minor road. So minor, the post van was the only vehicle encountered, before it dead ended after a mile and a half. Emma had the route description and was making notes and hopefully my comments were helpful, e.g. farmyard became stables. The route was now cross country until the village of Hawkechurch, a CP1 reject as too soon, but a short break for us.

At 6 miles in, the heat and the hills had exposed the limitations of my current capabilities. On reflection it was only an extra 100ft of climbing to Lambert's Castle, the highest point on the route, which I could have managed, slowly, from where it's almost all downhill to Charmouth. Lambert's Castle was the site of a semaphore telegraph on the Admiralty to Plymouth route, like those on the Timeball and Telegraph Trail, and should have expansive views.

But Emma devised a route off the Jurassic which started downhill sooner. A good start was a cattle trough for a good head ducking and then plenty of tarmac for easier going. But at one point it met a field of 8ft high maze. From the stile there was the start of a clear path. But then I lost Emma, Emma lost the path, I lost the path. Feeling like the joke Wellthehellarewe tribe of Pigmies, some calling out and field edge trees just visible above the crop allowed us to escape.

This route skipped Wootton Fitzpaine which will be CP1 but rejoined the Jurassic soon after. Still trending downwards, Charmouth was reached and a bus stop which was a prudent place to quit after 11 miles and 1400ft of ascent. The wheezing of the double decker's diesel engine repeatedly changing down gear out of Charmouth, made it clear this was a climb I could *not* have managed.

The cricket was bad – so bad I was home an hour early.

JIM'S 84 FOR 84! (BUT I DIDN'T KNOW THAT)

By Sarah Turner

Jill Green: Sarah, what are you doing for XXX dates in April?
Sarah: Oooh, I'm not working (that's a winner!). What am I saying yes to Jill?
Jill Green: We're organising a 50 miler for Jim's birthday, can you come over?
Sarah: Fab... I'm booking tickets now!

And that was that – another Isle of Wight sojourn beckoned and from experience you don't say no to a Jill and Jim IOW adventure!

In the wee 0600 hours of 18 April 2026, ten eager hikers full of enthusiasm and energy arrived at the abode of J&J near Sandown to embark on Jim's Birthday March. Shortly after

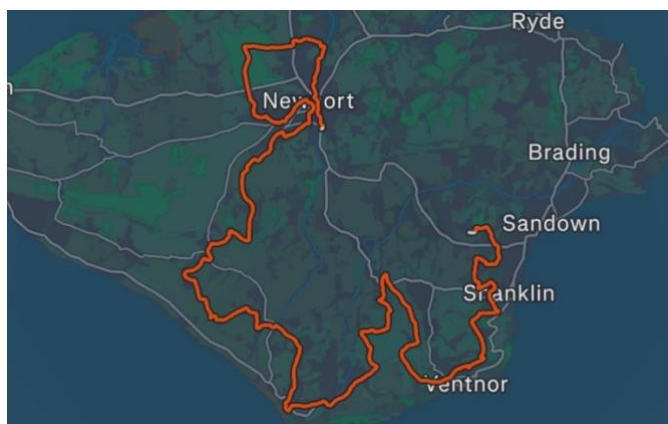


cups of tea, welcomes and hello's we then trod headlong into the breaking daylight under the diligent leadership of Jim.

Jill, who wasn't walking, had the most important role of the 24 hours: Check Point Coordinator / Catering & Project 'Morale Boosting' Officer. Accompanied with our itinerary in-hand Jill was able to follow us around the Isle armed with snacks and drinks, distributing morale with her ever-present cheerful demeanour.

Onwards and upwards we trod into the blossoming day, which as it turned out blessed us with hours of brilliant sun, highlighting magnificent IOW views.

From Sandown we headed south, skirting Shanklin, further south towards hilltop views overlooking Bonchurch and Ventnor, west and then north to



Godshill (CP1), south to Whitwell, west to Niton and Blackgang Chine (CP2), where we merged with motor bikers and vehicle tourists enjoying the car park view towards the south of the isle, parting with pennies to a welcome ice cream van doing a roaring trade.

It was, however, during the beautiful day my brain started to function as I was often hearing a phrase, '84 for 84'. After some musing the penny dropped, 84km is slightly more than 50 miles and I'd be out for longer hours than I initially thought. I knew it was Jim's 84th but I hadn't twigged the route was 84kms. Now it all made sense. Having been lacking in serious walking distance due to recovering from a late 2025 foot injury, and further Paris marathon training, my brain went into overdrive ... gulp ... 2 extra miles(!) ... but reining said brain back in, the resolve of one step at a time, CP to CP, became my mantra – a familiar LDWA mantra.



Further north we marched to Chale Green, west to Little Atherfield, north to Yafford and east to Shorwell (CP3), to continue NE to Newport via Carisbrooke Castle, with the sun setting in the west providing a sublime backdrop.



Around 8pm, with tummies rumbling, we were all relishing the delights of some simple good grub with a pint or two in one of the UK's finest Spoons, and it was here that we blended in with the 'youth of today' who were enjoying the finest ales, accompanied by much chatter, in warm sociable surrounds. It was proper noisy!

Looking rather 'walk ridden' we mingled in with the youth, minus Jim's poles that had to be confiscated by Security at the front door for fear of Jim using them as a prodding stick or as a weapon!

Regrouped with poles post grub, Jim continued to lead our journey which looped around Newport, before depositing us at the final CP at Shide, where our CP Coordinator, armed with flask and biscuits, greeted us in a small layby – still smiling.

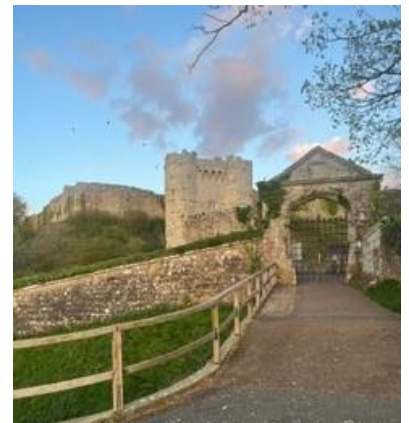


It was here that I plus one other decided to call it a day at 45.2 miles. I was trialling some new trail shoes and with a small blister determined to alter my gait, and with Jill's car looking awesomely comfy, I decided that 45.2 was good enough for me. At that early hour of the following day, there were four left – all of whom were signed up for the Kent 100 – with only 7 odd miles left and all ready to 'finish the job'. I understand the track became a little ropery; uneven with plenty of rocky stones that would *not* have been kind to my treated blister, so my early departure decision was a good 'un.

I was tucked up in Apse Heath when the strong foursome, Jim, Geoff, Debbie and Monika, quietly returned, welcomed by a still smiling Jill whose commitment to the event never wavered.

Jim was most chuffed he had achieved his 84 for 84. He had expertly led us around his home turf that he knows like the back of his hand, ensuring we achieved a reputable 4,300 feet of ascent in doing so. Never underestimate the Isle – coastal / inland / historical / flat and hilly, she bags it all.

A huge Thank You to Jill & Jim for your hospitality, and for organising the 84 for 84. But what is next for the inspirational duo ... 100 for 100 😊.



NICOLA AND CATHY'S ADVENTURES ON THE PENNINE WAY – over 17 days

By Nicola Foad

When I asked Cathy if she would like to walk the Pennine Way I believed that it posed no greater difficulty than any of the walking we had done and was well within our abilities. Taking us along the spine of England into Scotland through some amazing countryside on an historic trail would be an adventure and enjoyable. Cathy agreed. We booked with Macs Adventure to let them take care of the logistics of booking accommodation and baggage transfer. We thought that 17 days of walking would allow a comfortable pace and that any sight-seeing opportunities could be taken at the end of the day's walking. We did not consider it necessary to take any rest days.

Working around Cathy's conference commitments, and allowing recovery time from the Hunnypot 100 for me, we arranged to travel to Edale on 18 June and return from Kirk Yetholm on 6 July 2026.

A delay at St Pancras in the train setting off resulted in missing the connection at Sheffield to Edale. Time for tea in the station café.

An announcement followed that the next hourly service had been cancelled due to a passenger falling ill on the train. Cathy went in search of the station supervisor to see if alternative arrangements could be made to get us to Edale. Yes was the answer and we were told to wait in the station car park for a taxi to travel to Edale. The taxi driver arrived in his Tesla happy to drive out of Sheffield into the Peak District countryside and took us to the Rambler Inn where we were staying.

After settling in we decided to visit the Church in Edale. Serendipity. At the churchyard the vicar welcomed and invited us to the concert that was about to start and have a glass of wine. Students from the Chetham School of Music in Manchester were performing works by Debussy and Eugene Ysaye. It was delightful and the acoustics in the church suited and enhanced the music.

Day 1 Edale to Torside – 15.3 miles

Our first day of walking was described by Macs Adventure as strenuous and my brief note simply agreed. The path began under the canopy of trees gently ascending. Emerging beyond the trees the path gradually contoured around and up. Jacob's ladder followed; we took our time. Naively I thought that would be most of the ascent for the day and then it would be 'plain sailing'. Unfortunately heading towards Bleaklow Head across bog Cathy's shoe sank down and her foot stepped out. It was a hairy moment. Thankfully I managed to tug the shoe out from the bog and after cleaning up we set off again. Cathy's waterproof socks certainly helped. When we reached the sign to Reaps Farm in Torside where a taxi had been arranged to take us to our next accommodation at the Dog and Partridge it was a relief to know that we had reached the end of the first day's walk.

Day 2 Torside to Standedge Cutting – 12.75 miles

Today there were amazing views from above Laddow Rocks, and yes more bog. An excellent job has been done putting down flagstones but as we learned bog navigation on the Pennine Way is still a necessary skill. The mileage suggested an easier day but as we know some miles are more strenuous than others, and today, before lunch on the summit of Black Hill, involved some steep ascent. I was very happy to see lots of purple spotted and pyramidal orchids. In the afternoon we crossed Saddleworth Moor and passed several reservoirs built initially to supply water to the cotton mills of Manchester. I was confident that we would reach the Brunclough reservoir in time to meet the taxi taking us to the Old Bell Inn in Delph and sure enough we had an hour to spare and wait in the sunshine.



Day 3 Standedge Edge Cutting to Hebden Bridge – 16.5 miles



Walking along the canal we passed house boats that were moored and attractive displays of flowers and veg. Two canal boats chugged along more slowly than we were walking.

Our B & B was situated higher up in the town and a slog to reach; we discussed getting a taxi back in the evening after dinner.

Having enjoyed Sally Wainwright's 'Riot Women' on television, we asked our B&B hosts the name of the pub where filming took place. We were told to go to the Duke of Wellington (The Albert in the TV series) and went to enjoy a half pint there. After dinner Cathy stood outside the sign 'Riot Women' to have her photo

More extensive and amazing views today across to Manchester. How fortunate to have such clear and sunny weather. In the afternoon we could see and headed towards the landmark of Stoodly Pike. The ascent was gradual and the number of people in and around the tower demonstrated that it was a popular visitor attraction to picnic and admire the views.

The descent into Hebden Bridge was an opportunity to test the Macs Adventure app and decide which of the routes we would take. Until now we had relied upon Cathy's trusted GPS and Cicerone guide book with its detailed descriptions of the route. Thankfully the app was helpful and alerted us when we had missed the turning onto the canal path leading into Hebden Bridge.



taken.

Day 4 Hebden Bridge to Ponden - 10.35 miles

The Pennine Way out of Hebden Bridge involves a steep climb and on the advice of the B&B hosts we took an alternative route, initially enjoying the shade of the trees up to Jack's Bridge, before rejoining the official route. Along the way we saw a hare, black grouse, and curlews. Wildlife sightings never fail to excite me. Sadly on the minor road into Ponden there were lots of dead rabbits, and the owners of Ponden Mill, where we were staying, confirmed that there was myxomatosis in the area. Ponden Mill is close to Haworth and so we took a taxi to visit and have dinner. The Bronte Museum and church where the Brontes are buried were not open, which Cathy said would have been worth visiting.

Day 5 Ponden to Gargrave – 16.8 miles

Today was hot. The heat-wave extended northwards and made the climbs tougher. Saltsticks (electrolyte chews) helped me. How fortunate it was to arrive in the village of Lothersdale to find a pub open and enjoy a pint of cold lime and soda. Afterwards the entrance into the church yard seemed too far away to eat our packed lunches and so we sat in the shade of the doorway of the village hall. Refreshed and energised, the climb out of Lothersdale was eased. I had walked from near to Gargrave earlier in May and was looking forward to more vistas in the Yorkshire Dales and was duly rewarded. More amazing views and finally relief to be walking into Gargrave.

Day 6 Gargrave to Malham – 6.5 miles

At breakfast we chatted to a couple about our route ahead and Pen y Gent. There's an option not to go to the summit which we bore in mind. The weather was hot, but we had only a half day of walking to Malham and the opportunity to relax at Beck Hall in the afternoon. There was more shade and riverside walking on this section, and the bonus of a heron fishing. Hopefully a positive sign about the quality of the water.

In Malham we visited the National Park visitor centre where the ranger was interested to hear about the walking socks that have protected Cathy's feet. We ditched the sandwiches bought from the Co-op in Gargrave and had tea and sandwiches in a tea shop.

Beck Hall is very nice and comfortable offering plant-based menus. It is situated beside the river in a quiet area just away from the centre.

I find that I am lacking in energy in spite of it being a shorter and easier walk and realise that in the heat I should have had a saltstick.



Malham Tarn is much bigger than I expected and home to lots of birds sitting on the water. There are lots of orchids too – early purple and purple spire orchids standing tall and proud. In the woods just beyond the National Trust centre I saw two woodpeckers.

We stopped for lunch at Fountains Fell and chatted to two men walking north to south on the Pennine Way. They said that they might have a break from camping and spend the night in the comfort of Beck Hall. In the distance we could see Pen y Gent, and I was reminded of Table Mountain in Cape Town. Half way up to the summit of Pen y Gent we turned left to take the long descent down into Horton. This was a section

Day 7 Malham to Horton in Ribblesdale – 15 miles

We requested an early breakfast and set off as soon as I could get ready in the knowledge that it was going to be another hot day. Just as well because the heat still made the climb up Malham Cove tough. At the top, crossing the limestone pavement, we chose a slightly higher route which looked safer than clambering over the narrow and irregular shaped rocks where the official route passed.

I was not feeling my best but tablets for an upset stomach and saltstick thankfully worked.



where lots of flag stones had been laid and we saw a group of school boys climbing up in school uniform. Not an easy path and some of the younger ones were struggling.

Our farm-house B&B was situated about a mile out of the village of Horton and we were glad to arrive and sit under the shade of a large tree with a refreshing homemade cold drink and slice of Victoria sponge cake.

Day 8 Horton in Ribblesdale to Hawes – 14 miles

Walking today gave the opportunity to admire the views of the three Yorkshire Dales peaks of Pen y Gent, Wharfedale, and Ingleborough. The Ribblesdale Viaduct also came into view: what a magnificent piece of architecture and engineering nestled into the landscape. The curlews accompanied us and sounded their presence with their distinctive calls.

Starting the descent into Hawes I was hopeful we would arrive at the Wensleydown Cheese Factory before it closed. My wish is granted and the heat of the day was the perfect excuse to have a cold milkshake. But thunder clouds gathered and threatened a downpour. Our accommodation at Herriot's Guest House was in the centre of town and we arrived escaping the rain. Perhaps the less said about the accommodation the better; however, dinner at the White Hart Pub was very nice and I was surprised to be recognised at the bar, having stayed there earlier in May with my 'Trins' friends.

Day 9 Hawes to Keld – 13.7 miles

Prior to setting off we shopped for lunch and other supplies. I discovered that Hawes is not the place to buy electrolyte tablets and ended up buying some soluble tablets and dextrose lozenges. Ironically, the temperature felt cooler and the breeze made walking more comfortable. There was a gradual ascent over Shunner Fell. On the way up and again in the shelter on the summit we met 2 women from Gateshead who were doing the Green Dragon Challenge from Hawes to Tan Hill. Unfortunately one of the women fell and cut her face, but after some first aid they were continuing the challenge. The shelter was conveniently situated to have lunch and soon others came along occupying all of the seats.

Cathy had stayed in Thwaite and so it was a treat to find the hotel and tea shop open.

After leaving Thwaite we took the advice of the owners of our next accommodation sent in advance to come off the Pennine Way and take the more scenic route on The Heriot Way into Keld. It was good advice and was not a short cut.

Keld is a popular place with a campsite and small museum. The Pennine Way passes through and so does the Coast to Coast path. It was nice to see the new C to C signs with AW added. As Frith Lodge turned out to be some way further



along the Pennine Way, we had to phone for further instructions on how to reach them over a mile beyond Keld. But our hosts afforded us great kindness and hospitality and when we left we had clean laundry.

Day 10 Keld to Middleton in Teesdale – 19.9 miles

Just as we were about to set off it started to rain, and we decided it was easier to put waterproofs on at the outset. The rain did not spoil the walking and by the time we reached the Tan Hill Inn the sun was shining on the highest pub in England. It was too early and too soon to go in for a drink. Once again following the advice of the owners of Frith Lodge, we followed the road from Tan Hill and then the cycle route to Barnard Castle, not to get an eyesight test, but to detour from the bogs on Sleightholme Moor.

Back on the Pennine Way we followed Cathy's GPS and Pennine Way guide book to God's Bridge and crossed over moorland and down to Deepdale Beck. The wind discouraged stopping for lunch on the moor until reaching the hut lower down.

Suitably refreshed, as Cathy recorded on her Facebook postings, more undulating moorland followed and then up and down to Grassholme Reservoir, up to Wythes Hill, Harter Fell and finally a long descent into Middleton. Walking through Middleton it was evident that this was a nice place to visit, which sadly energy and time did not permit on this occasion.

Day 11 Middleton-in-Teesdale to Dufton 20.75 miles

Today was going to be a day of walking surprises. We began beside the River





Tees, a fast flowing and attractive river. We reached Low Force and then High Force and stopped to admire the views of the waterfall. Then came Whin Sill and Langdon Beck. Continuing up the river, we had to clamber over large rocks which reminded me of the shores of Lake Ennerdale, in the Lake District. No prizes for technique, but we managed. I could see ahead that we were approaching the Cauldron Snout and then the gushing waterfall came into view. For our next test we had to scramble steeply up large rocks beside the waterfall. It was tricky but again we managed. Maize Beck and crossing the next stretch of moorland was much easier.



I was looking forward to seeing High Cup Nick as visibility had not been good when I went up from Dufton on Hadrian's 100. Just below it, we saw a group of wild horses scampering in the distance, agile and majestic. On High Cup Nick itself we had fantastic views and a long descent into Dufton. We reached the Stag Inn only to discover that it didn't open until 6pm and didn't serve food on a Monday. We called our B&B host and she came to collect us and take us into Appleby for an early dinner. The recommendation on where to eat was good. On another occasion Appleby would be an interesting place to spend time visiting.



Day 12 Dufton to Alston 19.7 miles

Our host took us back to Dufton where we began the ascent of Cross Fell. It is long and steep and we took our time. The route differs from what I recall doing on Hadrian's 100 and took us off the road passing the Radomes on Great Dun Fell. We are very fortunate to be walking on a day when the sun was shining as we learnt that there is more frost, rain, and strong winds here than other places in the UK and around only 60 days of sunshine. We press on over a series of false summits to reach the trig point on Cross Fell at the peak of 893 metres where as luck would have it there was a cairn shelter to eat lunch.

The path descending from the peak was indistinct at times. I spotted a building in the distance which Cathy said was Greg's Hut. It was and a long track closed to traffic but drivable by 4 wheel drive vehicles led down to Garrigill. Hopes of finding a tea room in Garrigill were dashed and so we took a refreshment stop on the village green. A man asked if we knew where to book a place at the campsite; it appeared

that it was difficult even to find someone to help with that task.

Walking in the valley out of Garrigill took us into more gentle and rural countryside in contrast to the rugged fells and moorland we had crossed. But as we approached Alston, Cathy tripped and fell, cut her face and nose, and suffered very painful bruising. There was a lot of blood and Cathy was not sure if anything was broken. It was a nasty and shocking experience. Bravely after applying antiseptic wipes and a plaster and taking a short rest Cathy said that she would continue into Alston. I noticed a sign to the Cottage Hospital near to our accommodation at the Cumberland Inn and after checking in suggested going to seek help. Unfortunately when we went back signs indicated that the hospital had closed during Covid, and the nearest hospital was in Keswick! Searching on line I found advice for treating a broken nose and learned that generally this will heal without treatment. But fortunately, nothing was broken!

Day 13 Alston to Greenhead – 16.9 miles

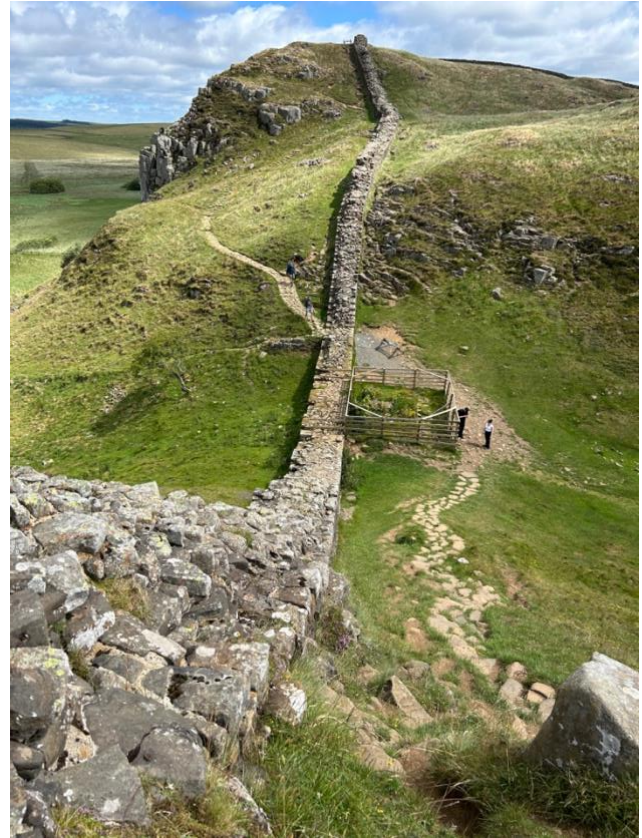
We left Alston along the South Tyndale valley and passed the



remains of the Roman fort of Epiacum. The viaducts of the South Tyndale Railway are smaller than the one at Ribbleshead but impressive all the same. Engineering works on the line appeared to be in progress.

After lunch at Lambley Common, came our next bog-crossing challenge over Hartleyburn Common. The guide book warned of the need to take care and what to do if we lost the path. I thought I could see the route but did not have the confidence to ignore the GPS. Some inelegant jumps followed. Realising that we were off course we found a way through the heather to reach a fence and walk back alongside. Just at the fence corner was a marker-post and we were back on track.

We crossed the A69 and I wondered why barbed wire was placed along the perimeter stone wall of the Haltwhistle Golf Club. Finally Greenhead came into view. We were staying at the Blenkinsop Castle Inn and had a further 1.5 miles beyond Greenhead to walk. Due to an error in the instructions we had been given, Cathy sought the help of Google maps to guide us on the final stretch.



Day 14 Greenhead to Bellingham – 22.4 miles

A combination of tiredness from not taking a rest break, injury, and in my case feeling run-down, led to a discussion about the day's walk and whether we might opt to do some sightseeing at Housesteads Roman Fort in the afternoon and get a bus into Bellingham. We agreed to defer our decision.

Our spirits were lifted when we had the offer of a lift back to the Pennine Way where it joins Hadrian's Wall path. Gary who is the jovial proprietor and chef offered the lift. When Cathy told him our timescale for walking the Pennine Way he asked what asylum we came from? We laughed and Cathy answered 'it's her' and pointed to me! Picking up on Cathy's accent, Gary said he knew all about Australia and he had watched 'Skippy' as a child.

Hadrian's Wall path is a popular national trail and the rich Roman history attracts lots of day walkers and visitors. This was to be the busiest section of walking. We began our walk in sunshine and strong winds. Luckily we had a tail wind but on the steep undulating ascents and descents still needed to be cautious. There were extensive views back to Cross Fell and into the south of Scotland. After elevenses on Winshields Crag, the wind speeds increased and made it slow going up at Steel Rigg. We reached the sad looking site of Sycamore gap and paused for Cathy to take a photo of the emerging growth from the stump.

Realising that we had completed the most strenuous part of the route today we decided to continue and leave Hadrian's Wall path, crossing moorland and into the forest. After lunch the moorland crossings posed no difficulty. From the Shitlington Crags we looked back across the moorland to see the route we had taken. Thankfully the last section of bog before Bellingham was crossed with ease and our accommodation at Riverdale Hall Hotel readily located as we entered the town. No transfers would be necessary.

Day 15 Bellingham to Byrness – 15 miles

Walking out of Bellingham, signposted as the capital of north Tyneside, we passed some independent shops and nice tea and coffee shops. Before the High Street, we passed Cuddy's Well, which the sign says is the local name for St Cuthbert's Well and the water is used in the nearby St Cuthbert's Church for baptisms.



Our route continued across moorland towards Troughend Common and Padon Hill. We are warned that perhaps the worst section of the Pennine Way would follow and had to climb a rocky, muddy and steep narrow path with a barbed wire fence running alongside. The guide book had offered a fair assessment, and at the top we were ready to stop for lunch.

Entering Kielder Forest we chose to take the straight forward undulating track ahead, and avoid the hard-to-find route through the trees. I was hoping to see Kielder Water but that was not possible and the density of the trees precluded seeing very far into the forest. Our arrival into Byrness was perfectly timed: we had reached our accommodation at the earliest time for check-in. It was most welcome to be greeted with a cup of tea.

At dinner we met the other guests staying, three who had walked our next day's section and had one final stretch of the Pennine Way to

complete, two others we had seen earlier and, like us, had two more sections to walk. We listened carefully as we were told to look forward to some of the finest walking. That was re-assuring and I was optimistic. The weather forecast of strong winds made Cathy less so.

Day 16 Byrness to Trows Farm – 14.5 miles

We were given instructions on where we would be collected at the end of the walk and, as a precaution, Cathy took a photo of the meeting place in the car park. The route up Byrness Hill was steep but not overly long and at the top we were rewarded with extensive views across to Catcleugh Reservoir. We followed an undulating path over the moorland. Roxane, one of our hosts, said that she loved running here with their dog.

We descended below Roman Camps, used by Roman soldiers in their training, and then climbed back up to the border fence between England and Scotland. I had wondered when it would become apparent that we were in Scotland and a sign about rights of way under Scottish law made this clear. The land use was another indication: heather on the Scottish side and grass where there had been grazing on the English side. Lunch was beside the mountain hut of Yearning Saddle. It was a place where some people camped.



We climbed up to Lamb Hill and then onto Windy Gyle at 619 metres. Four other walkers were there enjoying lunch and kindly took our photo. I hope that the pictures I took of them on their film camera were ok. We texted Roxane to say that we were at Windy Gyle as instructed so that she knew it was time for her to drive out from Byrness to the meeting point.

At a fork in the path off Windy Gyle we checked with the four walkers which route to take. Luckily we were all going back to the same car park. The descent is long, but our pace was faster than the other walkers. Eventually we reached a farm but it was not the car park we wanted. We met some people who had been on a mountain dog training exercise who advised us to continue down the track. We reached the car park to wait for Roxane after a good day's walk. At dinner it was time for a treat: a glass of ale from Bellingham, and sponge pudding and custard for dessert.

Day 17 Trows Farm to Kirk Yetholm – 15.5 miles

The distance today seemed like an easy walk, however we knew that the start involved a long climb up from Trows Farm back to Windy Gyle. Feeling tired, this was a slog. We had already discounted the option of going to the summit of the Cheviot and the low cloud and poor visibility made that a wise decision. Near the spur to the summit of the Cheviot it started to rain and got colder. Time to put on the waterproofs. How lucky we have been to have had little rain until the final day.

At Hen Hole there was a mountain hut where we stopped on the veranda for lunch. Two other men who had been camping on their Pennine Way challenge came along and had their lunch inside the hut.



complimentary half pint and receive our certificate at the Border Inn.

Post-script

This had been a far bigger challenge than I envisaged. I under-estimated the cumulative impact of walking for 17 days without taking a break and had not anticipated walking in a heat wave. Thankfully the challenge was not added to by prolonged rain and flooding.

Along the way messages of support and encouragement from family and friends believing that we would succeed truly helped. Opportune advice about the route ahead and offers of water from people we met were further instances of human kindness.

We both faced moments of difficulty and I am grateful to Cathy for her help in dealing with mine.

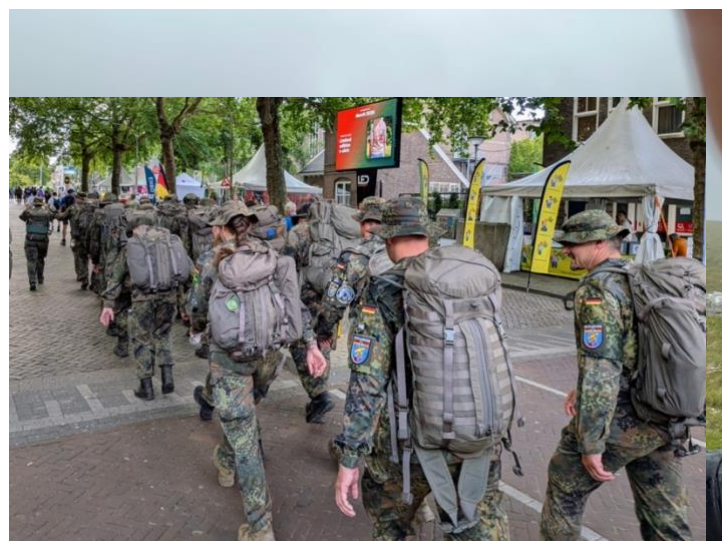
The Laich o' Moray 50 miler will be the next foray into Scotland.

THE 108TH NIJMEGEN MARCHES (DE 4 DAAGSE) 21-24 July 2026

By David Spring

As my 70th birthday approached I was wondering what I could do to mark the occasion. I had completed the Nijmegen Marches on 5 previous occasions as an individual plus twice with the army as a member of a team. Could I still manage it? There was only one way to find out.

The walk was conceived over a hundred years ago as a way of testing the fitness of the Dutch military. Over the years it has developed and is now open to civilians and armed forces from



all over the world. For the military, the requirement is to walk/march 40 km in 12.5 hours, wearing uniform and carrying a pack weighing a minimum of 22 lbs, for four consecutive days. Civilians can choose between 30, 40 or 50 km depending on age. There is no minimum weight requirement. The organisers are very strict about the cut off times for completing each day's walk, with no leeway being given.

The start and finish point is always the same, De Wedren in the centre of Nijmegen. You cover a different, well-signed and marshalled route every day, always on closed roads or cycle paths, exploring the surrounding areas of the city.

Support along the route is outstanding. It is reported that over 1.5 million spectators line the routes during the week. It feels like one big non-stop party with bands playing and sound systems cranked up to 11 in every field and village you pass by. Everyone along the route embraces the event. They decorate

buildings and street furniture, even out in force at 4 o'clock in the morning with thumping music, cheering and greeting the first walkers to set off.

The final day ends with a walk back into the city along what is known as the via Gladiola. The arrow straight main road is lined with huge temporary grandstands. The 6500 military personnel change into their parade uniforms and march back to the finish behind their respective bands, surrounded by civilian walkers, crying, laughing and dancing their way along the final couple of miles. At the same time, the cheering onlookers hand out thousands of gladioli.

The event was sold out, with 47,000 expected on the start line, and consequently accommodation in Nijmegen and the surrounding areas was in short supply. I managed to grab an Airbnb in Oosterbeek a beautiful suburb of Arnhem but 22 km from De Wedren.



to get going. A short circuit of the city centre led us onto the iconic Nijmegen bridge and out into the countryside, taking me back almost to the outskirts of Arnhem before looping back to the finish.

Day 2

This takes us out to the west of the city, passing through the university campus. Signs and posters were everywhere with messages of support for students out walking. The highlight of the day was the mega party in the town of Wijchen, which was awash with pink. Everybody and everything was decorated in pink and of course non-stop music to take your mind off aching feet.

Day 3

What a start! The same routine but it took me nearly 40 minutes to get through the start gate. Heading south today I was behind thousands of walkers, mixed in with marching troops. This was much

My start time every day was 4 o'clock in the morning. I set my alarm for 2. This gave me just enough time to have my breakfast drive to Nijmegen and then walk just over a mile from my parking spot to join the thousands queuing at the start.

Day 1

It took me just over 10 minutes to shuffle through the start point and get my wristband scanned. The Dutch are known as the tallest nation on earth and looking up at the people surrounding me I didn't doubt it. We were off walking in the dark guided only by the soft glow of street lights. The noise was incredible, whistles blowing, people singing and cheering, and me bleary-eyed still trying to wake up. It always takes me a couple of miles to get going so the speed of the walkers came as a bit of a shock. I guess the adrenalin was pumping as this swarm of walkers were excited



slower than the start on the first day: you could see that a lot of people were now struggling, feeling the toll of those kms already covered. With no way of passing, I just had to accept that it was going to be a long slow day. Eventually the routes split and the path opened up in front of me, giving me a chance to make up for lost time. I felt really good – motivated to push on as fast as I could. The last part of the route took us back



eastward and close to the German border, over a switchback of seven rolling hills – not really what you expect to see in the Netherlands.

Day 4

It was a great start and surprisingly I still felt really good. I couldn't believe I had managed to avoid the dreaded cramps so far. The weather conditions every day had been just about perfect, with cloud cover and temperatures around 18 degrees. Under foot the tarmac had been silky smooth. Not a single pothole to avoid anywhere. We headed south again this morning, looping through some very pretty riverside towns. A surprise awaited us in the town of Cuijk with a river crossing. At the far end we encountered the river Maas where a pontoon bridge had been built by the army just for today. I had been constantly passing some very weary walkers and eventually found myself nearly alone on the road, apart from spectators. In one small village, a lady spotted my red wristband and realised I was starting to follow the wrong route. She pointed me in the right direction just in time and I sped off. It's so unusual for me: normally I am just following the hordes of walkers out front. This was a totally new experience. Eventually I came on to the Via Gladiola and it brought a lump to my throat. I was still nearly alone on the road and I had thousands of people cheering and waving just for me, wow! Then on to the finishing straight and I skipped past TV camera crews and journalists looking for interviews. Now I had just to get the wristband scanned and collect my medal but there was a problem. I had arrived back 20 minutes too early. There were probably 15 other people sitting around waiting. How did I manage that?

Daagse is superbly organised. Anyone interested in long distance walking should consider giving it a go. If you manage to get an entry you will not be disappointed.

OBITUARIES

Liz Keeler LDWA 17473

Nicola Foad writes:

We have learned of the death of Liz Keeler. Sadly Liz died in December 2025 after a period of failing health.

Liz was a keen member of the LDWA Kent Group who led walks from her home in Stelling Minnis which were called 'Minnis Meanders', taking a different route each time. Liz knew the paths in East and South Kent extremely well, having lived in the area all her life. She did not require a map to follow her intended route. Liz loved plants and sharing her knowledge with us on her walks. Traditionally, Liz's walks did not stop at a pub for lunch; instead we would find somewhere with a wonderful view to picnic. At the end of the walk we would be invited into the conservatory in Liz's home for tea and biscuits. Liz was the ever-hospitable walk leader.

It was thanks to Liz that we had the opportunity to join her on a week's holiday walking in the Vanoise, France. Staying in a chalet in Champagny-en-Vanoise rented by her friends John and Margaret with their dog Bisto, we ventured out into the Alps each day to walk



Pictured in 2006: L to R: Bryan Clarke, Ivan Waghorn, Pat Clarke, Duncan and Ann Brice, Brian Buttifant, Anne Waghorn, Trevor Blake (hidden), Marianne Blake, Julie Welch, Wendy Thurrell, Liz Keeler



Liz in 2008

with Liz. As in Kent, Liz had got to know the area well, and in peak time for viewing orchids and many alpine flowers Liz could identify and tell us about the native plants we were seeing. I have many fond memories of the three holidays I had in Champigny-en-Vanoise.

The photographs of Liz, kindly retrieved from the Kent Group pictorial scrap book by Michael Headley, show that Liz was a stalwart checkpoint marshal. In addition Liz was one of the original organisers of the Kent Group's annual White Cliffs Challenge.

I will never forget the happy times walking with Liz and I offer my condolences to her family. Members of the Kent Group who knew Liz have reason to be grateful to her for her help and support and friendship.

Peter Mario Johnson LDWA 22302

Sarah Turner writes:

528 marathon man! A True Gentleman

Peter's mantra:

'There is no magic pill, no special shake, no secret diet, just get off your arse.'

Peter, a legendary ultra runner and one of the most respected figures in British ultra-running, sadly left us on 21 May 2026.

Peter was the youngest son of Basil and Rosina Johnson – his mother had a passion for the great singer Mario Lanza and wanted her new son to bear the name Mario. His father had other ideas, so Mario would be his middle one.

Peter took up running in his late forties and quickly became an endurance athlete. For more than twenty-five years, Peter ran almost every day. He kept meticulous records of every run and every race. He completed an astonishing 528 marathons, conquered races that most people can scarcely imagine attempting and became a familiar figure on towpaths, trails and roads across the country and beyond. In 2002 he represented Thanet in the London to Brighton 55-mile race, assisting the team to victory. He tackled the Thames Ring 250-mile race over four days. He travelled to the United States, Germany, Spain, Lanzarote, Gran Canaria, Poland, Paris and Nice through running and I'm sure there are many more countries he trod. He excelled in the gruelling Grand Union Canal Race, a non-stop event spanning 145 miles from Birmingham to London. He completed this 16 times. His Centurion completions, continuous running around a track, amounted to 17.



Within the LDWA Peter's achievements are numerous, spanning many years. He had the canny ability to remember historical events and dates with clarity – just like it was yesterday. He was the LDWA Wikipedia! When he didn't run, he would marshal, a trait he continued to follow at numerous events over the years including the local parkrun at Margate where he was a regular attendee, the Grand Union Canal and our own LDWA events.

Peter was a cheerful, charming, humble, nice chap, who loved Audible, the Archers, Classic FM & 'Spoons. He had a wonderfully dry sense of humour. If you managed to get him talking about politics, you were guaranteed entertainment as his comments were so wonderfully animated and often unintentionally hilarious.

After his passing it was announced that he was an organ donor – even at the end of his life Peter continued giving. His kidneys, liver and eyes will now help others to live fuller and healthier lives. One final act of generosity.

Peter leaves behind four children, his grandchildren, his ultra run clan, and our own LDWA clan. Rest well, Peter. Your race is run, your work is done, and your legacy endures.

SANDLINGS WAY 6 – 9 July 2026

By Helen Strong and David Thornton

Having previously walked the Suffolk countryside on the Flower of Suffolk 100 last year, with memories of wide open spaces, farms and fields, lovely villages and plenty of flora and fauna along the way, I was looking forward to the Sandlings Way – 57 miles from Ipswich to Southwold through some delightful Suffolk countryside.



The trip began with the longest car journey we've yet attempted in the Chinese Spy Car. With a full battery, we headed off to Ipswich, arriving around 10:30am, and parked in the centre of the city, having pre-booked a space. From there it was a short bus ride out to Rushmere to pick up the trail near the hospital, followed by a pleasant eight-mile stroll into Woodbridge. It was dark the last time I walked through this pretty coastal town, so it was good to see it properly in daylight.

As we reached the edge of town, we stopped to work out our best route to the Airbnb, and a gentleman asked if we were lost and needed help. 'I think we're fine, thanks,' David replied. But he persisted, so we told him the name of the road we were heading for. He paused, then said, 'I can direct you by trees!' – pointing above our heads – 'follow this path, past those trees there...'. We nodded, thanked him, and once out of earshot, laughed: we didn't much fancy navigating by trees, and stuck with Google Maps instead.



Day two was 21 miles to Blaxhall. The morning was a pleasant stroll through Rendlesham Forest (no aliens spotted), and the afternoon took us through Tunstall Forest, with a few long, hot field edges in between. The odd muddy puddle from the irrigation jets needed navigating around, but otherwise the path was smooth and easy to follow, with plenty of waymarks that looked to have been recently renewed. We also passed some pig farms, where the muddy puddles were there quite intentionally for the pigs to wallow in – they did look happy!

As we headed the short distance off-path to the village of Blaxhall to stay at the Ship Inn, the temperature seemed to be climbing – my watch said 95°F, and we certainly felt it. The Ship Inn is a lovely rural pub, and we were glad to arrive and quench our thirst with a pint of ice-cold lime and soda. After a shower, we enjoyed a real homemade meal in the pub, a rare treat for us. It was surprising how busy it was on a Tuesday night, and we enjoyed sitting out on the patio finishing our drinks, listening to the locals socialising with their tales and laughter.

Day three was another 20-plus miles. We should have set off earlier than 8 am to avoid the late-afternoon heat, but we got our heads down and were soon passing Snape Maltings along the way. Snape Maltings sits on the banks of the River Alde, a cluster of Victorian malthouses transformed by composer Benjamin Britten into a world-renowned concert hall and the heart of the Aldeburgh Festival. We usually make sandwiches for the day, but with temperatures forecast at 30–35°C every day, we thought we'd pick something up along the way instead. Today's first attempt was a sausage roll at the Maltings café – that didn't quite come off. The café door was open, but it seemed the till, and the girl behind



it, were not. I explained we only wanted a takeaway, but she refused all the same. So, the alternative was a basic convenience store with poor reviews in Knodishall, which we reached around lunchtime. We ended up with a pasta salad, which could have been worse.

By the afternoon we were walking the coastline. Having already had lunch in the shade at the edge of Thorpeness Golf Club, we didn't stop at the 'Sizewell Tea' café as we approached the power stations – a long stretch along a good path past these massive lumps of infrastructure, with more still being built. We were diverted further up the coast to turn inland at Minsmere Level Nature Reserve, ending the day skirting Dunwich and the edge of Dunwich Forest before finally coming off the trail towards the village of Westleton.

The Westleton Crown was another pub stay, as it proved impossible to find any other accommodation in the area for a single night at this time of year. We enjoyed a cold drink indoors and caught up on a little Wimbledon, before getting ready for the Kent Group committee meeting online – such dedicated folk we are.

The next morning brought a short final stretch of eight miles to the end of the route at Southwold, so we treated ourselves to a full breakfast at the pub before setting off. The path took us past Southwold Harbour, a quaint spot full of the middle-class folk enjoying their coffee. We chose to walk the beach promenade rather than the slightly inland route, to make the most of the onshore breeze, finishing at Southwold Pier. Often dubbed 'Little Chelsea' for its London-weekender crowd, we agreed Southwold's sandy beach arguably has the edge on Whitstable's. A passing couple took our photo, and we grabbed some lunch and an iced coffee before catching the bus to Halesworth and the train back to Ipswich.

Although we walked through real heat all week, the path itself was flat, and hats and plenty of hydration kept us cool enough. Horseflies were a recurring nuisance, though the insect



repellent wipes I'd added to my kit this time proved their worth – cheap but effective if reapplied regularly alongside the spray, and we didn't get bitten once. The forest sections offered welcome shade, if also plenty of insects, and the sandy tracks left my trainer clad feet distinctly dusty by the end of each day. Anyone tempted to walk it in winter instead should note it would likely be a windy proposition. For us, though, the combination of glorious weather and coastal-forest scenery genuinely made it feel at times like walking somewhere in France or Spain rather than the Suffolk coast – a thoroughly relaxing walking trip.

RYARSH EVENT

As has become customary, the Kent LDWA group met at Ryarsh Village Hall on Sunday 7 June for a 'pot luck' lunch to celebrate the achievements of the recent 100'ers. Alzbeta Benn, who had completed her 4th hundred on the HPH, was invited to cut the cake. The lunch was preceded by a short walk led by David Thornton.

