



LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION

Kent Group

aims: to further the interests of those who enjoy long distance walking

NEWSLETTER



"Mountain Rescue? Could you send an electronics engineer - my GPS has stopped working"

Number 56

December 2001

LDWA KENT GROUP PROGRAMME, DECEMBER 2001 - APRIL 2002

SUN DEC 9 - CHRISTMAS LUNCH & FAMILY WALK.

At "The Chequers Inn" at Crouch near Borough Green. Landranger 188, GR618 555. Sit down 2.00 for 2.15 p.m. There will be a short walk preceding the meal, starting from The Chequers Inn car park at 11 a.m. and finishing in time for changing and drinks before the meal.

FRI DEC 28 - SEVENOAKS TWENTY

The 20 mile version of the Sevenoaks Circular. Start Ide Hill car park GR488 518 at 8 a.m. Pub stop in Sevenoaks. Leader Brian Buttifant, [REDACTED]

FRI JAN 4 - WINTER NIGHT WALK

c. 20 ml. Meet 9.30 p.m. for 10.30 p.m. start. The George, Trottiscliffe. GR641 599. Out on Weald Way and return on North Downs Way. Leader Ivan Waghorn [REDACTED]

SUN FEB 10 - TREVOR'S TRUDGE 2.

c. 18 ml. 9 a.m. start. Meet Longfield Station c.p. Landranger 177, GR601 689. Pub stop, food available. Leader Trevor Blake, [REDACTED]

SUN FEB 17 - SEVENOAKS OUTCROPS WALK.

c. 10 ml. Meet 10 a.m. One Tree Hill N.T. car park, GR559 531. Visiting local places of interest. Old clothes advisable! No pub stop, bring packed lunch. Leader Martyn Berry, [REDACTED]

SUN FEB 24 - A MINNIS MEANDER.

c. 20 ml. Meet Ivy House, Stelling Minnis, GR147 483, Landranger 179 or Explorer 138, for a 9 a.m. start. Pub stop - food available. Leader: Liz Keeler, [REDACTED]

SUN MAR 3 - SEVENOAKS MARSHALS' WALK

For those helping on the main event. Roving marshals please contact Brian Buttifant on [REDACTED]

SUN MAR 17 - SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR

See 'Future Events' in December issue of "Strider" for details.

SUN APR 7 - WEDNESDAY WRINKLIES' WEST KENT KANTER REVISITED.

c. 20 ml. Meet 8.00 a.m. Ide Hill c.p., GR488 518, Explorer 147. Prompt start at 8.15. Pub stop at 12 miles, food available. Same area as previous kanter BUT this will be a group social walk - no kantering! Leader: Laurie Lowe, [REDACTED]

SUN APR 28 EVERYWHERE BUT ELHAM 2

c. 21 ml. Meet Elham Church Square, GR177 438, Landranger 179, Explorer 138, for 8.30 a.m. start. Pub stop, food available. Leaders: Jan & Neal O'Rourke, [REDACTED]

PUB MEETINGS are held on the first Monday of each month (except if that coincides with a Bank Holiday when they are postponed to the second Monday) at The Rose & Crown, Wrotham, GR 612 592. Meetings commence at 8 p.m. All welcome.

Please send items for inclusion in the April 2002 newsletter to Laurie Lowe, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

COMMITTEE

Chairman.....Paul Hatcher
Secretary.....Tom Sinclair
Treasurer.....Neil Higham

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Trevor Blake
Duncan Brice
Neal O'Rourke

Andrew Boulden
Brian Buttifant
Keith Warman

A Note from Ivan Waghorn :-

The Kent Group JANUARY NIGHT WALK was started in 1984 with a walk from Watlingbury station and has continued as an annual event from different locations. As you can imagine, all weather conditions have been experienced, from snow, ice, high winds, walking in the River Medway and even mild, moonlit nights. It is an ideal opportunity to gain experience in night walking.

The pace is steady (a/v 3 m.p.h.) with regular stops for food, drinks or whatever. I would suggest you bring some food, hot and cold drinks and a torch with sufficient new batteries to last the night. We go in any weather conditions, so bring suitable clothing and footwear. On average there are about 20 males and females on the walk with mixed ability.

You do not need a map or compass as I have already checked out the route (I hope!) Staying together as a group is essential. We won't lose you or leave you behind.

So why not give it a try ? If you want more information, give me a ring on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Refer to the Group programme for details of meeting place and time, etc.
Ivan Waghorn.

THE HIGH WEALD LANDSCAPE TRAIL

Paul Hatcher

While out walking and enjoying this superb route during the weekends when we could get out together, Keith, Shirlie, Mary and I thought that this walk could form the basis of our group programme for next year, thus giving the opportunity to others to complete the route without having to make all the necessary transport arrangements themselves.

The idea is to walk the route in six stages :-

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. HORSHAM TO WHITIMAN'S GREEN | 15 miles |
| 2. WHITIMAN'S GREEN TO EAST GRINSTEAD | 16 miles |
| 3. EAST GRINSTEAD TO BIRCHDEN | 14 miles |
| 4. BIRCHDEN TO BRENCHLEY | 14½ miles |
| 5. BRENCHLEY TO ROLVENDEN | 16½ miles |
| 6. ROLVENDEN TO RYE | 16 miles |

The relatively short distances will allow time to stop and look at things and places of interest and will also give an opportunity to those that feel that the length and pace of our usual walks are beyond them. The short stages also take into account the time which will be required to shuffle the cars before and after the walks. We would plan to meet at the end of a section, take all to the start in as few cars as possible, do the day's walk, and then return the drivers to pick up their cars - while the rest relax in the sunshine!!

We could possibly have one walk per month starting in April. If you are interested please contact PAUL and then if there is enough interest, we will sort out the details.
See Keith's article on the Trail on page 4.....

This route meanders for 90 miles around the northern perimeter of the High Weald from Horsham to Rye, via Cuckfield, East Grinstead, Groombridge, Goudhurst and Tenterden.

It was developed by the High Weald Forum in conjunction with Kent, East Sussex and West Sussex County Councils and a comprehensive guidebook was published in 1999 in the familiar Kent County Council style. The theme for the route is to explore various landscape types including forest, leisure, man's mark, lordly, productive and rivers and marsh.

Shirlie and I decided to walk the route from west to east in day stages. Paul and Mary Hatcher joined us for 6 wonderful outings, each one different and providing many treasured memories. The only disappointment was being unable to provide Mary with a tearoom at the end of each section, but I think I'm now forgiven.

From Horsham, we were soon amongst forest and heathland and visiting delightful villages of Slaugham (evidently pronounced "slaffum") and Bolney to reach Cuckfield, a small town on historic coaching routes. Our paths headed northwards through areas rich in hammer ponds from the Wealden ironworks. From West Hoathly, we followed for a while the perimeter fence around Weir Wood Reservoir and then climbed to East Grinstead.

The route took us high above the (infant) Medway valley and, just before Hartfield, we chanced upon tearooms at a farm where certain birthdays were celebrated in our own delightful garden bower.

From Groombridge, our day started fine but black clouds loomed overhead at Frant. Just after Hawkenbury the sky suddenly darkened and the most amazing storm enveloped us. All four of us huddled together under Mary's umbrella for half an hour, standing in a gurgling torrent. The way through Pembury to the lovely hilltop village of Brenchley saw us rained upon thrice more. (The rest of our days were all bright, warm and sunny).

Onward through Kentish orchards, to call at the isolated church of Horsmonden (2 miles from the village) on our way to Goudhurst. It was August Bank Holiday and, oh dear, the tearoom was closed! The lonely paths through sheep pastures and Angley Wood led to Cranbrook then Benenden, where we paused for refreshments under a medlar tree in the churchyard.

More seemingly little-used paths guided us through Rolvenden and Rolvenden Layne before we dropped to cross the levels towards Tenterden. We headed south now, through the secretive Tilder Gill where the lake was host to literally hundreds of noisy ducks. The Isle of Oxney was crossed via Wittersham. We then climbed through Peasmarsh before the long descent into the Tillingham valley and Rye.

This walk took us to many unfamiliar places and surprised us with the serenity discovered within our crowded and bustling region. We all thoroughly enjoyed our summer\autumn forays along the trail. Waymarking was generally very good and the guidebook, as well as containing enlarged 1:25000 scale Explorer maps, contains informative notes about the area. However, the maps do contain several minor discrepancies and I would be pleased to point these out to anyone interested in following in our footsteps.

The following letter was received from Rachel Cornish by Tom Sinclair together with permission to reproduce it in the Newsletter :-

Since you have gone to the trouble of writing about the Kent group, I thought I'd reply. I haven't considered joining because I have a young family - and so group socials or long, fast walks are not very practical. But we still do lots of walking - and even Foot and Mouth didn't stop much of the East Kent coastal walks. And we have just returned from climbing old volcanoes in the Auvergne.

I've sometimes wondered what the LDWA could do for families. I think group walks are hard, because if you go at the pace of the slowest, then with lots of very young children, very little progress will be made. And many people join the LDWA because they want long walks not dawdles.

But longish family walks are possible, especially if you know the area. I now have a large collection of good family-friendly walks in East Kent, together with useful information such as - are they suitable for papoose only (i.e. several stiles), rough terrain pushchairs, or pushchairs and scooters. Also things like playgrounds or interesting things (like hollow trees) I'd happily pass on some of this info to anyone holidaying in or moving into the area. I would have valued such information in other parts of the UK over the last few years. Trying to deduce from an OS map which paths have stiles or too many stinging nettles is rather hit and miss. I shall never forget nearing the end of a walk in Telford on my own with one child asleep in a papoose and another in a large pushchair - and meeting a very tall and narrow kissing gate !

And so, returning to thoughts of what the LDWA could do for families, I'd have appreciated a list of contacts (or web addresses) with useful local information on pushchairable paths. This would enable the next generation to grow up walking, and as the children get older, the family can return to longer distance walking. And the above information is useful for children of ages 4-6 who have outgrown pushchairs - but who love scootering (on scooters with large wheels). I hope the above is helpful,

Rachel Cornish.

If you have any thoughts on this subject or wish to contact Rachel for information, please do so through Tom Sinclair.

NIJMEGEN 17-20 JULY 2001.....Geoff Thorpe.

Having been completely starved of walking, due to F&M, when my walking colleague suggested competing in the Nijmegen Marches (50 km/day, maintained for 4 days, totalling 200 km or 125 miles) I jumped at the chance. Fortunately for me all the arrangements were done by Marijka, in Venlo, Holland (via Giles in Canterbury) She turned out to be a great friend and asset, taking care of all the domestics, and making sure that our stay in the Netherlands was so memorable. Due to work commitments, I gave the event no further thought until we were actually on our way across the channel.

We had full board with a local family (Christina) in Nijmegen, BUT what I hadn't realised was that each day's walking started at 4 a.m., which meant catching the bus at 3.30 a.m. We calculated that if we got everything ready the night before, we could get up at 3 a.m. and just get the bus. Waiting for this in a torrential downpour you question your sanity!

We were 2 among 40,000 walkers from virtually every country of the world, (we shared accommodation with Israelis) The common language was English. The start and finish were always the same point, Wedren Park in the city centre. There was a main circuit each day with loops off for the 4 routes, 40 km military, and 30, 40, and 50 km walking (running and jogging are banned resulting in disqualification)



To bed the first night - we couldn't sleep - too much excitement. The bus duly arrived on time and we made the 4 a.m. start, but had to shuffle for 15 minutes before we could start walking. A card is clipped at the start and finish, plus two points on route. The 50 km course was marked by red arrows, - what a holiday, no navigation, and no torches, just follow the thousands in the dark! We were cheered on by crowds of students who still hadn't been to bed. We walked north to Arnhem, then southwest to Herveld before following the banks of the Waal back to Nijmegen. It was all on asphalt and cobbles and people were already developing blisters. The day was cloudy, with little wind and some drizzle.

Day 2 was worse with some heavy showers. The route went east to Nift on the river Maas before looping back north to the river Waal and Nijmegen. The

blisters on my heels had burst but this didn't slow us as we continued at 3.5 mph.

Day 3, the loop went south to Milsbeek and then skirted the German border north back to Wedren Park via Groesbeck. This route was the best, including woodland, a hill and to make us feel completely at home, a thunderstorm and sunshine! Suddenly thousands of walkers looked as if they were on the Millennium 100.

Day 4 was total frustration with periods of sunshine followed by torrential downpours. After taking my wet gear on and off 6 times I finally gave up. The route went south west to Grave, crossing the huge steel bridge over the Maas, then east to Cuijk, recrossing the Maas. This was via a huge pontoon bridge constructed by the Dutch army just for the event. We turned north to the final finish.

The event was on roads closed to traffic. Because of this people couldn't travel and had taken the day off to engage in one big street party come cold, rain or shine. We were cheered on by flag-waving crowds wherever there was civilisation. Each little hamlet blasted us with disco music, at what seemed like 160 decibels! At every village a brass band entertained us. The number and size of these increased in proportion to the number of locals. Other musical entertainment was provided by the military who sang their hearts out in their marching groups using the official handbook.

Domestics were superbly organised. Refreshment halts were so profuse that all you carried were guilders and waterproofs. Because of the thousands requiring toilet facilities one soon lost all shyness in the open Dutch countryside. From all over Europe military Red Cross units catered for hundreds of feet. Whatever the state of your feet, even when bleeding, they would patch you up and send you on your way to the finish. We could do with them at the breakfast halt on the 100 to teach St. John's what to do!

Every day the mass of people cheering us on appeared to double. The crowds on the final walk into Nijmegen were unbelievable! We met Marijka, who had been doing the 30 km event at the village of Malden, and a few kilometres further on her family. After beer and sandwiches, (what hospitality!) we departed with armfuls of gladioli for the finish still 6 km away. The crowds were now 8 to 10 deep, with even temporary grandstands at the finish.

cont.....

The ambience throughout had been magic and it developed to a final crescendo at the end. This culminated in the most amazing street party of an estimated one million people, with no trouble, no vehicles and a totally bewildering ecstatic memory.

Geoff Thorpe.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS CIRCULAR

Brian Buttifant.

This walk was originally devised in 1989 by Mike Smith of the Kent Group for the Borough Council's celebration of the centenary of the granting of their royal charter. Lately it has been known as the "High Weald Walk" but now that "The High Weald Landscape Trail" has been established, it has returned to its original name. The re-vamping of the TWC has resulted in improved waymarking and the production of a new guidebook and maps.

With the help of Kent LDWA, an anytime challenge has been established for the route of 27½ miles. This challenge can be done in one, two or three days and a certificate and badge is available upon completion. Details can be found in the Guide Book which is available from local bookshops or direct from - Kent High Weald Project, Council Offices, High Street, Cranbrook, Kent. TN17 3EN.

FOOT & MOUTH FOOTPATH CLOSURES

I recently contacted the Public Rights of Way Team at the Council offices in Dover about several paths in the Swingfield and Denton areas of East Kent. We had found "Keep Out" notices on these paths and I felt that they were unjustified in the current situation. I received a prompt reply which confirmed my suspicion that the signs were illegal and could be ignored. I asked for and received a list of paths in Kent which were still affected by restrictions. The list was dated 12 October and is as shown below.

Homestead Farm, Stone Street, Petham, Canterbury. CT4 5PD.
Land at Rowling Bottom, Yew Tree Farm, Chillenden. CT3 1PS
Black Pond Farm, Woodnesborough. Map Ref. TR 292 569.
Field at Stodmarsh Road, Fordwich. Map Ref. TR 183 587.
Field at Sandown Road, Sandwich. Map Ref. TR 337 579.
Bonnington Farm Livestock premises, Goodnestone. Map Ref. TR 252 538.
Neats Court Estate, Isle of Sheppey.
Stickfast Farm, Howt Green, Bobbing, Sittingbourne.

Laurie Lowe.

COMMITTEE NOTES

Events - The Wealden Waters Walk was cancelled rather than risk annoying both farmers and walkers by going ahead on a limited entry basis, excluding those from areas still infected by Foot & Mouth Disease. If a farmer had requested a diversion, walkers could have been put at risk on narrow lanes, particularly at night. The decision was notified to the National Farmers Union and the Kent County Council, both of whom sent appreciative letters. At the moment it is planned to hold the event on 12/13 October 2002. Plans for the Sevenoaks Circular on 17/03/2002 (Marshals' Walk 03/03/2002) are going ahead and entry forms will be available by the time you read this. Offers of help to Trevor Blake, Duncan Brice or Brian Buttifant. Similarly Ernie Bishop is pressing on with plans for the Tunbridge Wells Circular on 30/06/2002 and will be glad of offers of help.

Social Walks - The KCC having eased restrictions due to F & MD in July, the programme got under way again with Shirley Higgins' Watlingbury Walkabout on 12th August. If you think that you might like to lead a walk sometime, have a word with Neal O'Rourke (or another committee member/walk leader) to find out what is involved - not too much - but planning ahead is essential so that brief details can be included in Strider and the newsletter.

AGM - Sunday 27th January 2002, Lympne Village Hall at 2.00 p.m. Letter, Notice & Agenda are enclosed along with a nomination form. If you think you, or a friend, might be willing to serve on the committee, in any capacity, have a word with Paul or Tom.

Membership - WELCOME to the following members who have joined the Group since last November :- Sandra Applegate, Melvina Bickham, Lynne Butler, Robert Heaton, Tony Henwood, Martine Huit, Laurie Keys, Kathryn Kingston, Mary & Terry Millings, Terry Owen, Michael Pile, George Royle, Thomas Sanders, Laura Sessions, Jane Stevens, Mel Stock, Clare Taylor.

Their names, addresses and, in most cases, 'phone numbers, are included in the enclosed up-to-date list of members. We look forward to seeing them on walks, at pub meetings and even at the AGM.

National News - A meeting of representatives from 17 local groups took place in Nottingham on 25th September when, according to our rep., there was a useful exchange of information, anecdotes and opinions. Another meeting is planned for 20th January 2002. If anyone has any suggestions for the agenda for the next meeting please will they contact Tom (even though it should not be presumed that he will be our representative again).

The 2002 National AGM will be on Sunday 10th March 2002 at the Abbey Hotel, Malvern. Details will be given in Strider but if you would like to know something about what goes on ask Paul or Tom.

Tom Sinclair, Group Secretary.

The following items of 'Tomfoolery' were sent to me by Tom Sinclair :-

One of the wonders of modern technology is the SPELL CHECKER. I am sure that anyone who has resorted to the use of this device has soon come to realise that it is not infallible, as the following demonstrates :-

"Spell Cheque"

Eye halve a spelling chequer,

It came with my pea sea.

It plainly marques four my revue

Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.

Eye strike a key and type a word

And weight four it two say

Weather eye am wrong oar write

It shows me straight a weigh.

As soon as a mist ache is maid

It nose bee fore two long

And eye can put the error rite,

Its rare lea ever wrong.

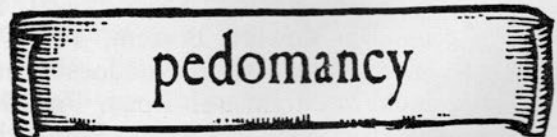
Eye have run this poem threw it,

Eye am shore your pleased two no

Its letter perfect awl the weigh -

My chequer tolled me sew.

"A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY"-22nd July
Feast day of Victor of Marseilles, a
patron of those with foot problems



Divination from the exam of the lines of the
soles of the feet.

-Reverend James Stormonth's *Dictionary of the English Language*, 1884

The feet short and thick signifieth a person to be weak; slender and short, to be wicked; fleshy and hard, to be a blockhead. The feet small and fair-formed, to be a fornicator; much hairy, to be lecherous and bold; naked of hair, to be weak of strength and courage; the inner part of the sole not hollow, but filled with flesh, that they make no hollowness in the step, to be beyond measure crafty and cunning.

-*The Shepherd's Prognostication*, 1729

GROUP LIBRARY -

I have been asked to remind members that Trevor Blake (01474 704581) holds a number of footpath guides, maps and books which are available to members on loan. A list of the items was published in the August 1998 Newsletter and I hope to include an updated version of the list in the next issue. Meanwhile, if you have any books, etc. which you no longer wish to keep, please pass them on to Trevor. A recent addition is "25 Walks in the Cotswolds" by Ted Fryer, HMSO.

THE GREEN CHAIN WALK

7th October 2001.

The G.C.W. is a network of paths linking the banks of the Thames with many of the finest open spaces in South East London.

Bill Gillibrand had originally planned a walk using these paths for use during the F&M outbreak, but it did not actually take place until October. The weather forecast for the day was appalling (heavy rain and gale-force winds), but in spite of this seven hardy souls met at Mottingham Station prepared for the worst.

In fact the morning proved to be fine and dry, as we headed generally northwards past Eltham Place, Oxleas Wood and Severndroog Castle to the Thames Barrier. Bill's timing was perfect - we arrived at the Barrier at 10.59 and the cafe opened promptly at 11.00 for freshly-brewed morning coffee. After this welcome pause we left the vicinity of the river and headed eastwards to arrive at the pub on Plumstead Common - still in dry weather.

Our luck held for about 20 minutes after leaving the comfort of the pub and then it started to rain, softly at first then gradually becoming heavier with a rising wind. Belatedly, the weather forecast was becoming true. We battled our way into the driving rain through woods and across open spaces for the remainder of the afternoon, but Bill managed to get us back to Mottingham on time, if somewhat dishevelled!

I found the walk surprisingly interesting and resolved to have another look at this area in better weather conditions.

Laurie Lowe.

ORDNANCE SURVEY MAPS - I have in my possession an O.S. publication listing "Printers and Copyshops Licensed to Reproduce Ordnance Survey Maps". The companies listed in this booklet are licensed to copy O.S. maps on behalf of customers for their business use. These companies operate within the copyright rules and terms laid out by the O.S. Towns throughout Britain in which licensed printers are located, are listed alphabetically. There are names and addresses of printers in Ashford, Canterbury, Chatham, Croydon, Dover, Folkestone, Hastings, London, Maidstone and Tonbridge.

Anyone who would like more information should contact me.

Laurie Lowe.

LAKELAND HUNDRED - 1st to 3rd June 2002. Present indications are that the event will go ahead. Please would people who volunteered to help in May 2001 (plus any others) let Tom know whether they will be available on the new dates to help on our checkpoint at Threlkeld (44 miles) between 4 p.m. on Saturday 1st and 2 a.m. on Sunday 2nd June.

COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY - MAPPING ACCESS LAND. The Countryside Agency has published draft maps showing registered common land (green) and open country (yellow) for South East and parts of North West England. On 12th November I attended the launch, in London, of the consultation procedure in the South East, including Kent. The procedure will take the form of a series of roadshows, each from 12.30 to 19.30 with presentations at 13.15 and 18.30, as follow :-

26th November 2001.....	University of Kent, Canterbury
10th December 2001.....	Camden Centre, Market Square, Tunbridge Wells
13th December 2001.....	The Friars, Aylesford
14th December 2001.....	Council Chamber, Tannery Lane, Ashford
2nd January 2002.....	Civic Hall, Stockwell Close, Bromley

If you are interested and free to attend, do go along and find out more about this development from the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act. If you have access to the internet you may visit the website www.countryside.gov.uk/access/mapping. There is also a helpline: 0845 100 3298. If you would like to comment on the proposed areas of access land (only 3% of land in the South East) Tom has a supply of forms.

TRESPASSING IN DORSET

Julian Herrington.

What a wonderful month October was and Sunday 21st did not let us down, the mid-point of a ten day holiday in Weymouth. A very slight drizzle greeted the intrepid band as they gathered for the foray into the downland west of Weymouth at Langton Herring.

The ponderings of a Kentish plodder were soon interrupted by the 'enthusiastic' arrival of Graham, the group's chairman who had already completed 25 miles the day before! Had I chosen to join a too athletic group on my first outing for at least two years? Would the knee take the strain?

My concerned thoughts were interrupted by Evie as she did a quick costume change relying on 'a thick sweater to hide her vanity'. Not only athletic but also a hardy group (forgive the pun)! Was it too late to turn for home? Thanks for the tip about glucosamine sulphate Evie - it seems to be working.

We were off to enjoy a 'Fishy Business' led by Phil and the weather immediately started to lift as we headed across the green sward. When walking out of Weymouth in any direction it always demands a climb and soon we were able to to enjoy views across to the Portland Heights as we meandered onward to 'The Crown' at Pucknowle. Lunch was enjoyed in shirtsleeves and in liquid, as well as good spirit! By this time I began to think that the seventeen years since my wife and I had lived in the Weymouth were too long. At this point can I thank you all for making me feel at home?

The last time that I walked in Dorset was on the east side of Weymouth on the 'Dorset Doddle', again in glorious sunshine, I think it was four years ago. And, as we lightly trod the downland homeward (thank goodness not as testing as the aforementioned cliffs), I was to enjoy again those green pastures, which gently slope down to the cliff's edge to nothing but the sea beyond.. For those of you who plan a weekend in Dorset, do not miss Ringstead Bay. And the Purbeck Hills combine rugged wildness with rich, green and fertile valleys.

As it is nearing the time when next year's campaign is planned, can I recommend to the Men of Kent and the Kentish Men that they strongly consider the Hardy Annual (25 or 35 miles) on the 19th May - it is only 3½ hours travelling time although it looks further on the map. A journey that will be well rewarded. Otherwise I hope to be able to join you in a further exploration in Dorset in the New Year.

THE 14th BLACKWATER MARATHON - SATURDAY 3rd NOVEMBER 2001

Four of us shared a car from Kent and we had an excellent walk in good weather. It was a nice reintroduction to LDWA walking after the F and M break. We started and finished the walk over a disinfectant mat courtesy of Ernest Doe the agricultural sundries suppliers.

There were several Kent Group members there and with an entry of around 160 and 140 starters it was a successful event for the Essex & Herts Group. A few glitches in the Route Description led some astray but the route itself was very interesting with paths through woods, fields and along waterways. It was wet and muddy in some places and the section along the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation was particularly bad. The checkpoints, food and marshals were, as usual, excellent and we had a good day out. We look forward to the next event in 2003.

Pat and Bryan Clarke

Scotland -2001

Every year Ron and I visit Scotland to enjoy the hillwalking there and tick off a few more Munros (hills 3000' and over). Molly and Peter Groundsell usually come with us, and this year, because it was 'special' i.e. I hoped to complete my round of the 284 Munros, Andrew Boulden came as well for the last week of our May trip. Over the years several of the Kent Group have accompanied Ron up various Munros, in all weathers. I had three left to do and Ron 21 having lost a year's walking to illness.

We had made our plans in November, booked the accommodation and looked forward to our visit. Then the dreaded Foot and Mouth struck. Lots of Scotland was open but the specific hillwalks we wanted to do were not. Ron planned to do the Skye Munros, and I was due to complete my round with two hills in Glen Affric and Ben More on Mull: not open.

I worried and kept checking the web sites. The Black Cuillin opened but only by routes which were impossibly long. We decided that we would go ahead with our visits and felt that we would be able to do some hillwalks even if not the ones we planned. We had lots of phone calls from Winky O'Neale - the guide Ron had booked for the Cuillin - updating us and finally the call which said Glen Brittle had been opened so Ron and she could do the routes.

It was a marvellous week. Hot, sunny and just right for scrambling on the gabbro of Skye. Ron managed to complete all the Munros on Skye and I spent the week as a tourist, driving round, doing easy walks and enjoying the weather.

From Skye I went into Affric on my own to stay at the Youth Hostel and climb the two very remote hills there. Ron was too tired after his efforts on Skye to come. The weather continued good and I walked the 10 miles up the beautiful Gleann Choinneachain, through the Bealach an Sgairne and the boggy Gleann Gniomhaidh to the hostel. The warden came out to greet me. I looked at her 'I know your face'. Then I remembered: she was Beryl Booth from the West Lancs. Group. The Invicta was her first 100 and she had been the last to finish. Her feet were so sore that she needed a car ride to the showers. It was lovely to see a friendly face. She remembers how well the Kent group looked after her and sends her best wishes.

I left early next morning in mist and drizzle to climb Sgurr nan Ceathreamhnan and Mullach na Dheiragain. A lovely stalker's path led up to the bealach at which point I walked out of the mist and had a wonderful walk above the clouds. Ticked these two off - only one to go. We went back into Affric to the Youth Hostel in June for Ron to do these hills and in contrast the mist stayed down all day making route finding tricky.

From Glen Affric in May, we went to Glencoe for Ron to do the Aonach Eagach then, with Molly, Peter and Andrew drove to Mull, climbing one of the best Corbetts (hills 2500'-3000'), Garbh Bheinn, on Ardgour en route.

We were on Mull for four days and tried to choose the best weather for my final Munro, Ben More. Saturday seemed the best option so we set off for the foot of the hill. The route had only just opened and the estate asked us to use only the main route up. Just as well, for after dipping our boots in disinfectant, we set off and the rain came and the mist came down. We plodded up to the summit and Andrew produced the champagne he had carried up. In the wind, mist and rain we drank the toast and hurried back down. Went to Tobermory in the afternoon: the sun shone! We had one other good walk on Mull - a Corbett. On Sunday Molly and I had a day off doing a nature safari: we saw, otters, sea eagles, golden eagles and many other birds. The men did a very hard hill walk to a demoted Corbett (now not high enough!)

We went back to Scotland in June and as well as going into Affric, Ron did two very long walks to complete the Ben Alder hills. I went with him on one walk. The traditional way to climb the six most remote Ben Alder hills is to camp as I had done, or stay in the bothy. Ron didn't fancy either of these options and decided he would rather do long walks. The weather was good and the rivers very low, which helped. For the first walk I dropped him off at 7.30 a.m. on the A86 just before Loch Laggan. He walked towards Loch Pattack, over the Bealach Lamhain, crossed the Allt Cam, then climbed onto Carn Dearg and traversed the ridge to Beinn Eibhinn (4 Munros). Then

onto Corrou Station for the 21.18 train. Only 22 miles but a lot of ascent c.1800m. He was three hours early for the train!

For him to go to Ben Alder and Beinn Bheoil, we caught the morning train from Spean Bridge to Corrou, then walked along Loch Ossian and up towards the Bealach Dubh. A steady pull upwards took us onto the massive Ben Alder plateau and then in a mile or so we reached the summit. Ron was ahead, and just to my right I saw a bird obviously distracting me from its nest. It was a dotterel. Rare, and very beautiful. They spend only two months here to breed and always on the high plateaux in Scotland. It was a privilege to see it. The whole walk was 25 miles but only about 1350m of ascent. I didn't go to Beinn Bheoil but looked after the rucksacks at the bealach between the two hills. It was a lovely walk back round Ben Alder then down the river to Loch Ossian. We were back at the station in time to have something to eat before the train came. A very satisfying day.

Ron had now just one Munro left to do- another remote - Meall Bhuide in Knoydart. We decided to go on the train to Mallaig. As it wasn't possible to get there in one day because the trains didn't tie in with the boat times (no roads into Knoydart) we had to book five nights accommodation for this one hill. One night in Spean Bridge, three in Inverie, and one in Tulloch on the way back. We were looking forward to this trip timed for early August.

Fate again conspired against us. On the Sunday before we were due to go I was out walking with my local group when, coming off Lingmoor at the end of a lovely day's walk, a large stone fell off a dry stone wall as I was crossing a stile. It crushed my big toe which involved three days in hospital and I am still on crutches. No walking for weeks until the crushed bone heals. Ron went on his own and climbed Meall Bhuide on a very wet day. The compensation for all the rain was that the rivers and burns in Gleann Meadail were impressive. His aim had been to complete this round of the Munros in 10 years. Mission accomplished with 9 months to spare despite the lost year. No champagne on the hill this time; we'll have it later.

Ann Beeching
17 August 2001



Ron, Beryl & Ann at Affric.



The injured party!

Please send any copy for the April 2002 Newsletter to me by early February.

Laurie Lowe, Editor.