

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION — KENT GROUP

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

NEWSLETTER



2007 Sevenoaks Circular pictures (above and overleaf)

Number 72



April 2007



LDWA KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS PROGRAMME

April-August 2007

Sun Apr 1 ROYAL STROLL 2

c.20mls. Meet at Harrietsham stn. for 8.30am start. GR 867529. Includes visit to Peter Barnett's memorial and Leeds Castle grounds. Pub stop – food available. Contact leader nearer the day for confirmation of details. Maps: LR 189 Exp 148. Ldrs: Neal & Jan O'Rourke. Tel: [REDACTED]. email: [REDACTED]

Fri Apr 6 ANOTHER SOUTH DOWNS WAY LOOP

Good Friday. c.26mls (or 20 alternative). Meet at Eastbourne, western end of seafront – B2103 at South Downs Way marker post. GR 600972. Pub stop (or two!). Ldr: Graham Smith – tel: [REDACTED]

Sun Apr 8 HIGH WEALD LANDSCAPE TRAIL 5

c.19mls. Ardingly – Horsham. Meet at Horsham stn. at 9am to arrange cars. GR 178309. Ring Graham Smith for more details – tel: [REDACTED]

Sun Apr 15 FISH AND CHIPS – ANOTHER HELPING

c.20mls Meet at Jefferstone Lane, St. Mary's Bay for 8am start. GR 090275. Park on roadside near village hall. Pub stop (Fish and chips optional). Ldr: Mike Pursey. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sat Apr 28 THE FOUR PITS WALK

c.40mls. Meet 7am just past the bridge over the River Stour at Fordwich (GR 179598) for a walk which will visit the sites of the former Kent pits of Chislet, Betteshanger, Tilmanstone and Snowdown. Unsupported, but there will be refreshment stops, including at least one pub! Ldr: Graham Smith. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sun May 13 ANOTHER MINNIS MEANDER

c.18mls. Meet at Ivy House, Stelling Minnis, for 8.30am start. GR 147483. Bring packed lunch. Ldr: Liz Keeler. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sun Jun 17 HEART OF THE WEALD – Marshals' Walk

For further details ring Neal O'Rourke on [REDACTED]

Sat Jun 30 BOULOGNE TO CALAIS

c.28mls. Meet at Dover Eastern Docks at 7am to catch ferry to Calais, then train to Boulogne. Walk back to Calais to catch approx 11pm ferry to Dover. Don't forget your passport. NOTE: It is planned to use car(s) on the crossing – please phone Graham for details. Ldr: Graham Smith. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sun Jul 8 HEART OF THE WEALD - MAIN EVENT

See Events Diary in Strider.

Sun Jul 15 TUNBRIDGE WELLS CIRCULAR

27.5mls. Meet near Southborough Church. GR 576428. Park on edge of common, opp.cricket pitch, for 8am start. A testing route on which please carry own food and drink. KCC do a good guide with route maps, if faster than leader, available from most bookshops. A certificate may be available if leader knows you are coming. Ldr: Brian Buttifant. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sun Jul 22 WHITE CLIFFS 29 (Social)

c.29mls. Meet 9am at Walmer Station. GR 364504. Pub stop. Contact Graham Smith for more details on 01304 367853. Follows the challenge walk route.

Sun Jul 29 IT'S A MINT

c.10mls morning – 8 mls afternoon. Figure of eight – walk either or both. Starts: St. George's Church, Wrotham, 8.30am and 2.15pm. Exp 147 LR 188. GR 612592. Pub in the village – people requiring sandwiches there are asked to contact Tom Sinclair on [REDACTED] by Friday July 27. Ldr: Ivan Waghorn. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sun Aug 12 CREAM TEA WALK

c.20mls. Meet Charing Station C.P. for 8.30am start. GR 949492. Pub stop – probably food available. Contact leader nearer the time. Ldrs: Neal & Jan O'Rourke. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sat Aug 18 WHITE CLIFFS FIFTY – Marshals Walk

For further details contact Gordon Harker on [REDACTED]

Sat Aug 25 SOUTH DOWNS THIRTY

A walk on the South Downs for those missing the Sussex Stride! c.30mls. Meet 9am at Eastbourne, western end of promenade (B2103) by South Downs Way marker post, GR 600972. Park near school on left. Ldr: Mike Pursey. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sat Sep 15 WHITE CLIFFS – MAIN EVENT

50mls or 29mls - See Events Diary in Strider.

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. Meetings commence at 8.30pm. All welcome.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman – Brian Buttifant, tel [REDACTED]

Secretary - Bill Gillibrand (tel [REDACTED])

Treasurer – Neil Higham ([REDACTED])

Members

Duncan Brice ([REDACTED])

Joy Davies (tel [REDACTED])

Gordon Harker ([REDACTED])

Mike Pursey (tel [REDACTED])

Graham Smith ([REDACTED])

Footpath problems – Shirley Higgins (tel [REDACTED])

Newsletter editor – Graham Smith, e-mail [REDACTED]

Kent Group website is www.ldwa.org.uk/kent

FROM THE EDITOR

GREETINGS everyone.

Welcome to the first Kent Group Newsletter produced by yours truly – with great help from several other people, particularly Bryan Clarke, who has printed it, and Shirley Higgins, who has arranged for its distribution. Thanks to all Kent Group members who have sent contributions – we have clearly got some fine writers among our members.

Taking over the Newsletter from Laurie Lowe is a daunting task, because Laurie did such a superb job with it over several years. He is going to be a very hard act to follow, but I am going to try.

The main point I want to make to Kent Group members – and I can't stress this enough – is that this is **YOUR** newsletter, so all contributions will be very welcome. If you would like to write about a challenge walk or a social walk you have enjoyed – or a walk you haven't enjoyed! – then please write a report on it and send it to me; if you want to reminisce about the LDWA, as Ernie Bishop is doing with his excellent series of articles about Striders and Group Newsletters, the latest of which is contained here, then let me know; if you want to make any points about the LDWA in general or the Kent Group in particular – even if it's constructive criticism about our organisation – then send them to me; if you want to sound off about farmers and rights of way, then sound off in your Kent Group newsletter; if you want to write about poser mud, then feel free. Send your articles/thoughts to me at [REDACTED]

As I say, it's **YOUR** newsletter, and it can't function properly without your input.

And on a similar subject, we are very lucky in Kent Group in that we have such a varied programme of social walks, but we always need more, so if you want to lead a walk which you feel other members

would enjoy, then contact our social walks secretary Mike Pursey, who will put it in the schedule. Wishing everyone wonderful walking for the rest of this year, and in particular lots of luck to those Kent Group members who are tackling this year's 100 in Mid Wales.

Graham Smith

PHOTOS are from the Sevenoaks Circular 2007. By Christophe Delogne and Bryan Clarke.

ROYAL STROLL 2

ON Sunday April 1 Neal and Jan O'Rourke are leading this 20-mile walk, which will include a brief pause at White Horse Wood to see the two trees planted in memory of Peter Barnett. The pub stop is at Eyehorne, where there will be food. Further details from Neal and Jan on [REDACTED] Neal will have his mobile telephone on the day – [REDACTED]. See **Social Walks Programme**.

FOUR PITS WALK

Graham Smith is leading the Four Pits Walk on Saturday April 28. The walk starts from Fordwich at 7am, and will be about 40 miles. It will visit the sites of the former Kent pits at Chislet, Betteshanger, Tilmanstone and Snowdown, and follows the Three Pits Walk Graham has been doing for several years. The walk will be unsupported, but there will be refreshment stops, including at least one pub stop, and it will be ideal preparation for anyone tackling this year's 100. See the **Social Walks Programme** for more details.

NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS

NEAL and Jan O'Rourke are organising this year's **Heart of the Weald Challenge** on Sunday July 8, from the Commemoration Hall at Wadhurst, East Sussex. There will be two distances – 14 miles and 26 miles. See Events Diary in Strider for full details.

As some members may know, Sunday July 8 is the date of another major event in Kent – the Tour de France, the Kent leg of which will go close to the Heart of the Weald Challenge. Neil has been in contact with Kent Police, and although there will be road closures on that day, none of these will affect Wadhurst, and the A21, which many people will use to reach Wadhurst, will not be closed. So our summer challenge walk is definitely on, and marshals are needed – please contact Neal on [REDACTED]. The marshals walk will be on Sunday June 17 – see **Social Walks Programme**.

THIS year's **White Cliffs Challenge** will be on Saturday and Sunday September 15/16, from Betteshanger Sports Centre in Deal. It is being organised by Gordon Harker and his team. As with last year, there will be two distances – 50 miles and 29 miles. See Events Diary in Strider for full details. Marshals are needed on the event – please contact Mike Pursey on [REDACTED]. The 50-mile marshals walk will be on Saturday August 18, and the 29-mile route will be walked on Sunday July 22 – see **Social Walks Programme**.

MID WALES 100

KENT Group has been asked to help run a checkpoint at Cant Canolbarth Cymru, being held between Saturday May 26-Monday May 28, based at Llandrindod Wells.

It will be checkpoint 6, at Llangunllo (41 miles), which will be open between 6.30pm-5.30am, so two shifts will be needed. Llangunllo is accessible by train. Any members wishing to help should contact Brian Buttifant on ()

SUSSEX STRIDE

MANY Kent members have enjoyed this excellent 50-mile challenge walk over the superb South Downs, organised by our neighbours in Sussex, and will have been very disappointed that it was cancelled last year due to an apparent lack of interest. A letter in December Strider, from Anthony Mitchell of Sussex LDWA, asked for feedback about the event. Some Kent Group members are likely to make an approach to Sussex LDWA with an offer of help, to see if the Sussex Stride can perhaps be resurrected in 2008. We will keep members informed.

In the meantime, for those who fancy a good walk on the Sussex Downs at the end of August, Mike Pursey is leading a South Downs Thirty on Saturday August 25 – see **Social Walks Programme**.

THE PUNCHBOWL MARATHON – February 11 2007 —Keith Warman

KENT (and perhaps Surrey?) endured a filthy storm during the night before this year's event and this continued throughout our journey to Witley. At 7:25am, spirits were lifted when I poked my head out of Chichester Hall to see a blue sky with very little cloud.

One mile into the walk, a very painful toe stopped me in my tracks. I couldn't put any weight on it and wondered how I was going to limp embarrassingly back to the start. In desperation, my partner Shirlie offered me painkillers which, amazingly, went straight to my feet and meant that I was able to gingerly hobble on.

Sporadic drizzle was encountered at the A3 crossing and around the lower part of the Devil's Punchbowl, but the wintry hues of brown, purple and green were a joy to behold. The descending gullies towards Kettlebury Hill were glutinous in places and made for tricky progress; the sort of going which Tim Glenn would claim as being "somewhat sporting".

Sporting or not, when the mud abated, the rocks were still there to trip us up. The ridge after Kettlebury Hill was relatively calm and wind-free, which enabled us to take in the lovely heathland on both sides.

At Tilford, more painkillers were administered and the general consensus was that the toe problem was gout. It was here that John Lay twisted my toe and chivvied me into penning this report.

Suitably refreshed, and having decided that 30 miles was possible after all, we set off confidently across the swollen River Wey towards Crooksbury Hill. The steps to the top seemed steeper this year and a short breather was needed. From there, the clear tracks were easy to follow, until we became

navigationally disadvantaged on the plateau of Puttenham Common. We caught up another couple here, checking their map, and they believed me when I said gleefully "It's this way". Oh dear! If they are reading this, I apologise. We had to enact a short corrective manoeuvre to regain the required track.

Checkpoint three at Puttenham was passed through and soon we joined Gordon Harker from the Kent Group. I was looking forward to the riverside footpath just before Elstead which, in the past, has been muddy after rain. (My vague memory was of a far-off Surrey Summits along this path in the night when it was under water!) On this occasion, someone had thoughtfully removed a three-plank footbridge across a tributary brook, so I now know how hurdlers feel when faced with the water jump.

The easily-missed enclosed footpath out of Elstead was found and Shirlie and I were strolling steadily towards Thursley Common. Peaty-black swamps infested with adders and sand lizards needed wading to reach the sanctuary of checkpoint four in Moat Lane car park. The rest of the common was rather drier until we reached the ford before the A3. I have been able to wade across in the past, but the torrent of swirling water rushing by on this occasion meant the footbridge was put to good use. In fading light,

familiar paths were trodden to arrive back on the verandah at Chichester Hall just before torches were necessary.

Certain parts of Surrey may be renowned for winter mud, but we were pleasantly surprised at just how dry some of the paths and tracks were.

Shirlie and I thoroughly enjoyed our day and would like to thank the Surrey Group marshals and helpers for their part in that enjoyment. Our experience knows that a lot of effort goes into putting on a challenge event, and not just on the day itself. Special thanks to those marshals who were on duty at more than one checkpoint.

STRIDERS AND GROUP NEWSLETTERS ————— Ernie Bishop

NEWSLETTER No. 8 was circulated in May 1974. It was about this time that Celia and I began to take an interest in the local Ramblers and joined their walks on Sundays in areas within reasonable distance of Tunbridge Wells. The LDWA was unknown to us then but was trying to make itself known.

It was a fine spring and the association could enjoy a good list of walks in May and June, probably the peak of the year in spite of the AGM that was not particularly well attended and the Peakland Hundred, the major event, had a shortage of entrants. Seventy-four started and only 33 finished, quite apart from there being a shortage of helpers. Of the entrants, more than 50 per cent came from the South and very few from the area of the walk.

The Icknield Eighty was held two months later and there were 50 finishers out of approximately 60 entries. It was surprising that Paul Fitter (aged 16) finished fourth in the 100 and second in the 80.

Obviously very good for his age, considering the distances, but never a member as far as I'm aware.

One of the major events, very well attended in the south in the early days, was the Tanners Marathon. In 1974, 70 set off at 5am to complete a 50-mile circuit in 15 hours; four hours later nearly 600 started on the 30-mile route, to be finished by 8pm. It has been going since 1960 and was probably at its peak in the 1970s and 1980s. Since then entries have reduced and the organisers have changed.

The major item in Newsletter No. 8 was from the association's first president, Dick Crawshaw, who provided three and a half pages entitled Breaking The World's Walking Record. Quite an achievement. He had pneumonia three times before he was five and at the age of 12 had a serious illness which kept him in bed for 12 weeks. The doctor warned him against running up stairs in case his heart was affected. From that time he did the opposite of what the doctor advised. He ran, swam, climbed and took part in various sports. When he could he ran and swam before breakfast. During the war he was in the Parachute Regiment and after leaving the Army he continued parachuting for nearly 30 years.

He started long distance walking in 1956 and commanded a TA parachute battalion. He selected a team from the battalion to take part in the International Walks at Nijmegen in Holland. For training, over a weekend, in full battle order, they walked 107 miles from Goole to Liverpool.

In 1973 Dick Crawshaw decided to make an attempt on the world record, aiming for 250 miles. The details on this cover about 3.5 pages, so I will have to compact it. Training and diet take up space and I was unable to be perfectly sure that the distance achieved was 255.88 miles in 76 hrs 21 mins. Against a previous record of 250 miles in an unknown time. If anyone would like a copy of the article I'll try to bring a few copies to the next meeting.

Alan Blatchford prepared three pages called What's In A Place Name? which was quite interesting, but probably only touches on a number of peculiar place names in this country. He advises interesting reading in G. J. Copley's English Place Names and Their Origins and E. Ekwall's Dictionary of English Place Names (Oxford).

Newsletter No. 9 appeared in September 1974. There were a few more events on the calendar for 1975, one of which was the second Downsman 100 in the coming spring, for which there were 200 entrants. I think that was the turning point, when more people heard of the LDWA and decided to join. At that time there seem to have been eight separate groups, Peter Rickards being the regional representative for the

South East, which included a few members from Kent.

Keith Chesterton (LDWA 81), with mainly Surrey area members Jeff Ellingham, Alan Blatchford and Mike Brown and about a dozen or so volunteers, had finally circled London on June 30, and mapped out a route for a suitable footpath. The distance was about 200 miles, but they had to iron out difficult sections with clear descriptions, and then publish it.

One article was Eight White Horses from David Wilson, who described how the 'white horses' on Salisbury Plain were cut out on the hills and scoured every eight years or so. Having read this, he and 12 others decided to see the eight sites. Only two of the party completed the 78 miles.

The second was Back O'Skidda. A party of six arose early and then walked briskly on a fine morning which gradually turned to mist. After lunch at the halfway point high winds turned to heavy rain. The group made for a shop after crossing the River Calder, but it was closed, so they plodded to Bowscale Tarn in the teeth of a gale. Bowscale Fell and Blencathra were omitted and they aimed for a small bothy, due to the heavy rain and hail. By now it was dark and they forded the Calder and went down to Wiley Gill. They could then make it for the house and a log fire to dry out.

One other fell walk was a circular walk from Great Langdale to reach the three peaks of Helvellyn, Scafell Pike and Conistone Old Man, to reach the three counties of Westmorland, Cumberland and Lancashire. I was quite impressed that their walk started at 2am, they covered 42 miles on the ground with 11,000 feet of ascent and it took them 19.75 hours. This was abbreviated but it was a walk that they will remember. Written by John Barton (LDWA 162). Does anyone know if he is still a member?

Newsletter 10. Up until this point the Newsletter tended to be printed and distributed fairly haphazardly, when time and sufficient information was available. Numbers 8 and 11 were printed in 10 months. From there on it became Strider, with three regular deliveries a year.

Kent Group had been formed in the autumn of 1974, due to Peter Rickards, and a first group walk was held on Sunday October 27. Two more walks were planned, one led by Len Wilson, who was a new member to the group.

This was a time when other regions also began to grow, largely due to the regional representatives. Tony Rowley had Bristol under way, starting with organised walks for the first four months. Surrey had been planning for various monthly walks and, particularly, to raise volunteers to help design a good route for the London Countryway. Other groups forming in the South were Essex & Herts, Wessex and Devon.

More to come.

A NIGHT ON THE TERRACE – January 5 2007 ————— Ivan Waghorn

PICK a dry, mild night, a full moon, and you have the best conditions for a January night walk.

Twelve of us set off from Kemsing, full of good ale, at 10.45pm for our night adventure. Seven of the group were used to night walking, having completed the annual LDWA 100.

Straight up to the Downs to join the North Downs Way, through to Otford, passing on the way the realistic scarecrow hiding in the garden and the upright corpse in the graveyard!

After crossing several fields we stopped for our first break at the start of the Terrace, a mile-long wide track along the hillside. Our route now took us by the highest ladder stile in Kent, into Lullingstone Country Park. The Visitors' Centre outdoor tables and security lights were ideal for our main stop, at approx. 3am.

Twenty minutes later we were off across fields to Shoreham and up the steep steps. The fittest were released to power their way to the top. Myself being the leader, I brought up the rear!

A short stop at the Fox and Hounds (not a 24 hour pub) and on to pass the Rising Sun, cross further fields and back to Kemsing via the NDW, arriving back at 6am.

I hope everyone enjoyed their night out.

MIKE Pursey, Geoff Thorpe and myself had a very enjoyable four days walking from Calais to Hesdin between October 2-6 last year, following GRs (Grand Randonees).

GRs are a national system of routes which follow paths, tracks or minor roads, and the 82.5 miles between Calais and Hesdin are in the Nord Pas de Calais region, a pleasant area of rolling countryside which provides some good walking. It is also, of course, just a fairly short hop – or rather a 90-minute ferry journey – from Kent.

Day 1: Calais-Wimille (24.5 miles).

We took a P&O ferry from Dover, and after a good breakfast and calm crossing, we were walking by mid-morning. After walking out of Calais, we reached Coquelles – familiar to Kent Group members who have done the summer Boulogne-Calais walk or the Christmas Cruise Around Calais – before picking up GR 128. The weather veered between heavy showers (so heavy we twice got absolutely soaked) and fine sunshine which soon dried us. The GR took us onto Mont de Couple, which at 530 feet is an excellent viewpoint: we could see a huge part of the Nord Pas de Calais, as well as a long stretch of the Kent coast we had left hours earlier.

We then dropped into the village of Audembert to follow minor roads before rejoining GR 128 at the village of Raventhun. Here the GR follows more minor roads before we left it to go to Wimille, where we had booked a hotel. Much to my surprise, we arrived before it got dark.

Day 2: Wimille-Desvres (17 miles).

After Mike and Geoff had attended to foot problems, we set off in the autumn sunshine (shorts weather) and followed minor roads which took us to Mont de Colombert, at 380 feet a fairly good viewpoint but nothing like as spectacular as Mont de Couple the previous day. Soon after this we picked up GR 128 again, following it to La Capelle, where we had a beer (or was it two?) before entering the forest Dom de Boulogne, which made for some straightforward walking although there were some boggy stretches. Emerging from the forest, we reached the village of Questrecques, where we left the GR to take a minor road straight to Samer, our intended destination and where we thought there would be a hotel. Samer seemed a very nice town, but an inquiry at the town hall revealed it no longer had a hotel, which was confirmed by a subsequent inquiry at the tourist information centre. But a very helpful lady there told us there were hotels at Desvres, seven miles away, and she told us when the next bus was going – in 15 minutes. So we got on the bus to Desvres, which also seemed quite a nice town, and found a hotel as soon as we got off.

Day 3: Desvres-Montreuil (21 miles).

We set off in more autumn sunshine but soon made another mistake – leaving Desvres without going into a shop to buy supplies to last us the day, which was a bit silly. We walked out of town thinking we would find somewhere, and we suddenly found ourselves on a minor road leaving Desvres. We didn't fancy turning back to find a shop, and we were debating whether to divert to Samer (which would have been a mile or two off the GR when we rejoined it) when – like a fairy godmother – a woman drove past in a bakery van. We stopped her and bought some bread. Then some kindly locals let us fill up our water bottles, so we had bread and water to see us through the day – hardly ideal but it was something. We picked up GR 121 at Wierre sur Bois, and after a steepish climb on a minor road we then took a track to Mont Corbeau, at 570 feet a tremendous viewpoint. It is also a delightful ridge, and for me the best part of the walk. We then dropped down to the village of Bernieulles, and shortly after crossed the main N1 road for some good, long open stretches to Brexent-Enocq. The GR then heads south-west and then switches east, going around some water courses before the approach to Montreuil. After a long, steady climb we were rewarded with a fine profile of the ancient town, surrounded by its fortifications. Getting to the outskirts, a very helpful lady pointed us in the right direction through the ramparts to the town

centre, where we had booked a hotel. It had been a long, fairly hot day, and we had all suffered foot problems – and from my own point of view I learned that it's not very wise walking 21 miles carrying a pack on nothing but bread and water.

Day 4: Montreuil-Hesdin (20 miles).

This is a very nice walk, and we avoided the mistake of the previous day by going into the first supermarket we could find to get provisions. The weather was not as good as the previous two days – a bit overcast, with the threat of showers (which did materialise later, but they were fairly light ones). We then walked out of Montreuil, descending through the ramparts to cross the Canche river and reach the neighbouring town of Neuville. A steady climb brought us into more rolling countryside before the GR turned to head broadly south-east, staying more or less parallel with the Valee de la Canche all the way to Hesdin. The tracks on this part of the GR are excellent, and very well waymarked, which made for some very good going. Mike was having some foot problems but Geoff and myself cracked on, dropping down to meet the Canche again at Beauranville before another steady climb to cross more open country. After lunch at the village of Cavron St-Martin, we entered the forest Dom d'Hesdin. Good, well waymarked tracks took us through the forest which we left at a minor road which brought us into Hesdin. Geoff and I arrived at our pre-booked (and very good) hotel just after 3.30pm, Mike arriving about an hour later. We showered, then had a couple of beers in our hotel before finding a restaurant in town to celebrate the completion of a fine four-day walk in the Nord Pas de Calais.

NEW YEAR AGAIN ON THE SOUTH DOWNS ————— Graham Smith

POOR weather meant numbers were restricted to eight on this year's Kent Group New Year's Day walk, but what a fine start to 2007 it proved. Joy Davies, unfortunately, had a bad cold and could not make it, and the weather forecast was for blustery showers and strong winds, which deterred others from coming. We certainly had strong winds but there were no showers, in fact there was no rain at all during the day. Six Kent Group members and two from Surrey met at the end of Eastbourne promenade at 9am on January 1, and the strong winds greeted us as we got to the top of our first ascent, near Beachy Head. But we buttoned up our windproofs, got our heads down and marched on past the Belle Tout lighthouse to Birling Gap, where we regrouped before facing the major challenge of the day – the Seven Sisters. I remain convinced there are nine of them (perhaps the other two are half-sisters) but striding headlong into fierce winds made it feel that there were even more. Dropping between the sisters meant we were out of the wind, but as we got to the tops it was into the strong winds again. It was bracing stuff, and a real battle to get to the last sister at Cliff End, but at least we were walking on what felt like a smooth green carpet. At Cliff End we were rewarded with superb views across to Seaford and Newhaven and up the Cuckmere Valley.

We dropped down into the valley for our coffee stop, and it was such a relief to be out of the winds. We then followed the River Cuckmere along its muddy banks – but in sunshine – to Alfriston, where we had lunch and a pint (just one!) at the Star Inn. We then followed the river and crossed fields to Milton Street, from where we began the long ascent of Wilmington Hill, above the famous Long Man. Past the trig point, we turned right and followed the ridge – with excellent views – to Folkington Hill, before dropping down to Jevington, and another pint (again, just one!) at the Eight Bells.

After that it was the last climb of the day, and nothing like as steep as Wilmington Hill, following the South Downs Way all the way back to Eastbourne, with good views all the way. We had made very good progress, and got back to the cars – in plenty of daylight – at 4.30, which meant we had covered the 20 miles in under six-and-a-half hours. It had been an excellent walk on the South Downs – which are, of course, the closest we've got to real hills in the South East.

LDWA MEMBERSHIP

The following letter has been sent to Bill Gillibrand from national membership secretary Peter Haslam. It is self-explanatory. Membership records at national level have been a disaster in recent years, so Kent Group members are asked to do what they can to help.

A LETTER TO MEMBERS

IN my first year as membership secretary I am experiencing a heavy workload processing the 2007 renewals.

This I can cope with, just. What daunts me, however, is the prospect of sending out hundreds of reminders in February/March to jog the failing memories of our ailing membership, and processing the resulting late renewals in March.

I need to produce a mailing list for the printers in mid-March to enable them to post out April Strider.

This must be accurate and as up to date as possible at the time of downloading to a form acceptable to the printer.

Could you please, therefore, ask your members to renew as soon as possible.

And if any member is not renewing for 2007, to please contact me, to avoid the added expense of sending out an unnecessary reminder.

The saving of postage alone will help us all, by keeping down costs.

I know that not all members are in regular touch with local groups, but every little helps, and please jog memories if possible when seeing members out on social walks or events.

Peter Haslam,
Membership secretary,
[REDACTED]

FARMERS FACE LEGAL THREAT OVER PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

The following article appeared in Kent on Sunday in December, and should be of interest to all LDWA members. It shows that action is being taken to force farmers to reinstate rights of way.

FARMERS in East Kent who do not comply with the law by restoring public rights of way are facing a clampdown.

Kent County Council has inspected 70 footpaths this month after complaints from walkers about paths destroyed by ploughing or growing crops.

Action has already been taken following one farmer's failure to reinstate three public rights of way.

Costs will be recovered from him and a prosecution is likely to follow.

KCC cabinet member for environment, highways and waste Keith Ferrin said: "Most farmers do mark out their paths and reinstate their land, but there are some who do not comply and we are taking action to put this right.

"Legal action is a last resort but it is important that footpaths are kept clear and in good condition so that everyone can enjoy our beautiful countryside."

Landowners are required by law to reinstate their land if they plough up or obstruct walkways.

Persistent offenders and those with a history of not complying may be faced with further legal action through the magistrates court and also reported to the Rural Payments Agency for non-compliance, which may mean losing a hefty slice of their rural grants.

Further inspections and legal action will continue through next year as the clampdown is extended throughout the rest of the county.

To report blocked paths contact the East Kent Public Rights of Way 24-hour report line on 0845 3450210 or email prow@kent.gov.uk.

*LDWA members should note that the e-mail addresses for path problems in Mid Kent is midprow@kent.gov.uk and for West Kent it is westprow@kent.gov.uk

THE NORTH DOWNS CHALLENGE — Saturday 12th May 2007

This set of four walks (5, 10, 15 or 20 miles) takes place to raise money for St Mary's Church, Kemsing. The entry fee includes light refreshments at checkpoints and a ploughman's meal at the finish with a timed certificate. Full information from [REDACTED]
Telephone [REDACTED]

COMEDY CORNER — from Bill Gillibrand

Why God Created Children (and in the process grandchildren)

TO those of us who have children in our lives, whether they are our own, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, or students — here is something to make you chuckle.

Whenever your children are out of control, you can take comfort from the thought that even God's omnipotence did not extend to His own children.

After creating heaven and earth, God created Adam and Eve. And the first thing he said was "DON'T!"

"Don't what?" Adam replied.

"Don't eat the forbidden fruit," God said.

"Forbidden fruit? We have forbidden fruit? Hey Eve — we have forbidden fruit!"

"No way!" – Yes way!"

"Do NOT eat the fruit!" said God.

"Why?"

"Because I am your father and I said so!" God replied, wondering why He hadn't stopped creation after making the elephants. A few minutes later, God saw His children having an apple break and he was miffed!

"Didn't I tell you not to eat the fruit?" God asked.

"Uh huh," Adam replied.

"Then why did you?" said the Father.

"I don't know," said Eve.

"She started it!" Adam said.

"Did not!" – "Did too!" – "DID NOT!"

Having had it with the two of them, God's punishment was that Adam and Eve should have children of their own. Thus the pattern was set and it has never changed!

But there is reassurance in the story!

If you have persistently and lovingly tried to give children wisdom and they haven't taken it, don't be hard on yourself. If God had trouble raising children, what makes you think it would be a piece of cake for you?