

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION — Kent Group

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

NEWSLETTER



Number 75



April 2008

www.ldwa.org.uk/kent



LDWA KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS — APRIL-AUGUST 2008

Sun Apr 13 SAXON SHORE WAY - PART 4

c14mls. Faversham to Herne Bay. Meet 9am at Herne Bay Pier (GR 173684) to arrange cars to drive to start of walk. Pub stop. Ldr: Graham Smith. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sun Apr 27 CHILHAM TO CHILHAM

c.20mls. Meet 9am Chilham c/park (GR 066536). Pub stop. Ldr: Mike Pursey. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sun May 11 SAXON SHORE WAY - PART 5

c18mls. Herne Bay to Sandwich. Meet 9.30am at Herne Bay Pier (GR333576) to arrange cars to drive to start of walk. Pub stop. Ldr: Graham Smith. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sun Jun 8 SAXON SHORE WAY - PART 6

c15mls. Sandwich to Dover. Meet 9.30am at Dover Priory Station (GR 314415) to arrange cars to drive to start of walk. Pub stop. Ldr: Graham Smith. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sun Jun 29 A WALK WITH THE SMUGGLERS – Marshals Walk

For further details contact Neal O'Rourke. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sat Jul 5 A NEW FRENCH CHALLENGE

c.20-22mls from Coquelles, just outside Calais, after taking P&O ferry from Dover at approx.7am. Note: it is planned to use car(s) on crossing. For further details contact ldr: Graham Smith. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sun Jul 13 A WALK WITH THE SMUGGLERS – MAIN EVENT

See Events Diary.

Sat Jul 19 1066 COUNTRY TRAIL BASH

c.31mls. App.8am start. Meet Rye railway station (GR 919205- £1.00 market c/park, adjacent) for PROMPT 7am departure to Pevensey/Westham station. Essential to be able to complete the distance and to contact leader to arrange transport, etc. Food available in Battle at 16 miles. Ldr: Neal O'Rourke. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sun Jul 27 IT'S A 2nd MINT

10mls morning & 8mls afternoon, figure of eight. Start: St. George's Church, Wrotham (GR 612592 - Exp.147, LR 188). 9am or 2.15pm(or both). Food available at Rose and Crown, Wrotham. Ldr: Ivan Waghorn. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sun Aug 10 CREAM TEA WALK

c.20mls. Meet Pluckley railway station for 8.30am start. Pub stop – food available. Ldrs: Neal and Jan O'Rourke. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sun Aug 17 SAXON SHORE WAY - PART 7

c15 mls. Dover to Hythe. Meet 9.30am at Hythe Light Railway Station (GR 153347) to arrange cars to drive to start of walk. Pub stop. Ldr: Graham Smith. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sat Aug 23 SOUTH DOWNS THIRTY

c.30mls. Meet 8am at Eastbourne, western end of promenade (B2103) by South Downs Way marker post GR 600972. Park near school on left. (Please note change of start time from last year). Ldr: Mike Pursey. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sun Sep 7 WHITE CLIFFS CHALLENGE – Marshals Walk

c.29mls. from St. Margaret's Hall, St Margaret's-at-Cliffe (GR 358445), start 8.30am. For further details contact Graham Smith. Tel: [REDACTED]

Sun Sep 28 WHITE CLIFFS CHALLENGE – MAIN EVENT

See Events Diary.

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.

Please note that our usual celebratory post-Hundred meeting, organised for those Kent Group members who have taken part in or marshalled at the Yoredale 100, will be on Monday June 2.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman – Brian Buttifant, [REDACTED]

Secretary – Bill Gillibrand, [REDACTED]

Treasurer – Neil Higham, tel [REDACTED]

Bryan Clarke – tel [REDACTED]

Joy Davies – tel [REDACTED]

Nick Dockree – [REDACTED]

Gordon Harker – [REDACTED]

Mike Pursey – tel [REDACTED]

Graham Smith – [REDACTED]

Footpath problems – Shirley Higgins, tel [REDACTED]

Newsletter editor: Graham Smith – tel and e-mail as above.

Photos in this newsletter were taken by Bryan Clarke and Nick Dockree.

COVER STORY - KENT GROUP MEMBERS WHO HAVE COMPLETED TEN LDWA 100 MILE WALKS

<i>Year of Completion</i>	<i>Name</i>
1987	PETER RICKARDS
1988	BRIAN BUTTIFANT
1989	ERNIE BISHOP
1989	RON ROWETH
1989	PHIL HASTINGS
1991	RICHARD TOMBS
1991	PETER BARNETT
1994	GORDON FACER
1994	DON NEWMAN
1995	JILL GREEN
1996	ANN SAYER
1997	NEIL HIGHAM
1997	IVAN WAGHORN
1998	ANN BEECHING
1998	JANE DICKER
1998	KEITH WARMAN
1998	PETER WEST-KELSEY
2000	ANDREW BOULDEN
2000	BRIAN RUSSELL
2002	PAUL HATCHER
2002	ROGER THORNBURGH
2003	MARTIN FOX

THE above names appear on the newly engraved trophy kindly donated to Kent Group by Jane Dicker. Jane was born and bred in Maidstone, and despite having lived in Hastings since the early 1970s, she still considers herself a Kent person.

The trophy is in the shape of a Triangulation Pillar (Trig. Point). It is one of a pair especially made for Jane and her partner, Keith Baker – a keen LDWA member who sadly died in 2005, and who, like Jane, had completed some Hundreds. Keith, like Jane, liked to touch Trig. Points when reaching the summits of hills, and he asked a carpentry teacher at the Hastings school where he was working to build two Trig. Points to scale. Being a Kent person – and a member of Kent Group, of course – Jane has decided to give one of the trophies to us, which is a lovely gesture.

The trophy was displayed at the very successful dinner at the London Beach Hotel, near Tenterden, in December (see reports below).

Three of the people whose names are on the trophy – Phil Hastings, Peter Barnett and Peter Rickards – are, like Keith Baker, no longer with us.

Some of the above have walked more than 10, and some continue to walk 100 milers. Four members have completed nine. Sadly, one of those, Trevor Blake, has had back problems and will not be able to do any more. The others are Merv Nutburn, Kevin Puttock and Avril Stapleton.

These statistics were supplied by Keith Warman who has taken over the job of LDWA record keeping from George Foot.

NEWS OF KENT CHALLENGE WALKS — WALK WITH THE SMUGGLERS

THIS year's High Weald challenge, from Goudhurst, will be on Sunday July 13, and will be the sixth and last one organised by Neal and Jan O'Rourke. It will again be two distances – 26 miles and 14 miles – and people wishing to marshal are asked to contact Neal on [REDACTED]. The marshals' walk will be on June 29. Anyone wishing to enter the marshals' walk should please let Neal know by Sunday June 22 in order for him to arrange food and marshals. There is no time limit. And if for any reason members who have agreed to help find that they can longer do so, they should let Neal know ASAP PLEASE – ring the above telephone number or answering e-service [REDACTED].

Neil Higham has offered to run our High Weald event from next year, and the 2009 event will be the Andredsweald, from Forest Row. More details in the next newsletter.

WHITE CLIFFS CHALLENGE

THIS year's White Cliffs event has a new venue – St Margaret's Hall, in St Margaret's-at-Cliffe, just outside Dover. As explained in the last newsletter, because we are working with Surrey and Sussex groups on the KSS Triple Challenge, there will be no 50-mile route this year. But this year's WCC will comprise routes of 28 and 14 miles. The longer route leaves St Margaret's and soon picks up the White Cliffs, which it follows to Dover and Capel. It then returns to Dover via Whinless Down, before taking the North Downs Way and paths and lanes to Ripple, Ringwould and Kingsdown, where it rejoins the White Cliffs for the return to St Margaret's. The 14-mile route goes out to Dover via the White Cliffs and then takes a circle following paths and lanes to Ringwould, from where it takes a shorter and more direct line back to St Margaret's.

The event is on Sunday September 28, and St Margaret's Hall, opened in 2000, is a superb venue, with excellent kitchen

facilities and plenty of parking. People wishing to marshal should contact Mike Pursey on 01303 268255. The marshals walk will be on Sunday September 7 – see KENT GROUP SOCIAL WALKS above.

KSS (KENT, SURREY, SUSSEX) TRIPLE CHALLENGE

FOUR Kent Group members – Christophe Delogne, Gordon Harker, Stephanie Le Men and Graham Smith – took part in the Surrey Tops marshals walk on March 1-2, with others taking part in the event itself on March 29-30. The Surrey Tops was the start of the KSS Triple Challenge of 50-mile walks on successive years in which we are taking part with Surrey and Sussex Groups. Next year our White Cliffs Challenge will again be organised as a 50-miler, and will be in its usual mid-September slot. The following year will see the welcome return of the Sussex Stride, likely to be held in July. Sussex Group have already offered to run a checkpoint for us at next year's WCC.

YOREDALE 100

AS mentioned in the last newsletter, we are running a checkpoint at the West Yorkshire 100. This will be at Kettlewell (67.8 miles) and will be open from midnight-8pm on Sunday May 25, so three shifts will be needed. Kent Group members going are planning to make it a proper weekend which – apart from running the checkpoint in our usual efficient manner – will involve some walking in the delightful Yorkshire countryside. Anyone interested in going should contact Brian Buttifant on the above telephone number.

WESSEX 100

THE 2009 100 is a bit closer to home. It will be based at Alton, near Winchester in Hampshire, and Neil Higham has attended some of the organising meetings. The route is in Sussex and Hampshire, including stretches along the South Downs. Kent Group will be asked to provide marshals.

FAMILY DINNER ON SUNDAY DECEMBER 2 2007 By Bryan and Pat Clarke

THIS year we went to the London Beach Golf Hotel on the A28 near Tenterden. This is more central for Kent Group members and attendance was increased on the last few years with 41 bookings, though two unexpectedly did not appear.

The dinner was preceded by a walk and unluckily this took place in very wet conditions. However, there were excellent shower and changing facilities available to us. Many thanks to Jan and Neal O'Rourke for leading this walk.

Before the meal we could relax and meet with friends and a drink in the lovely lounge with views over the golf course. Our raffle was set up and the hotel kindly added two bottles of wine to the prizes brought in by members to bring the number up to more than 30. Our usual system was employed whereby each attendee was given one raffle ticket and also one each to the eight staff who were looking after us. There were 39 people in attendance so the prizes were almost one each!

At end of the meal the raffle was drawn amid great gaiety as the winners were cheered (or jeered!) on their way to choose their prizes. Several staff were among the winners. Pat and Bryan Clarke organised this part of our function. Our dining room was set up with large round tables and we could choose where we preferred to seat ourselves. The meal was excellent and the staff very helpful and friendly. Your committee are enthusiastically planning to book the same venue for 2008.

The December Newsletter was available in addressed envelopes and a good number were taken to save the group some postage. Thanks to Shirley Higgins for working hard to prepare them for this occasion.

Our new trophy (see above) was also on display. This will honour those Kent Group members who have completed ten LDWA 100 mile events. The names and years of completion appear on a brass plaque on the trophy.

Bill Gillibrand and Brian Buttifant deserve congratulations on finding this gem of a venue for our annual family Christmas Dinner.

CHRISTMAS WITH FRIENDS

By Alan and Pat Sutton

Ingredients

Suitable venue

Several miles of pleasant country walking

A dozen companionable walkers

Three hours of bright, crisp weather

Pre-lunch drinks in the bar

Tasty lunch, cordially served

Coffee and mince pies

Method

Place the venue in a beautiful setting. Make sure the area has a plentiful amount of country footpaths with varying terrain, allowing three hours walking. Improve by taking a good leader. Add to this one mixed bag of walkers. Try and ensure you keep the participants dry and warm, using bright sunshine if available. Upon completion, have ready suitable changing areas to use to advantage, prior to meeting up with non-walking friends for pre-lunch drinks. Exactly on time, following instructions, participate in a three course lunch with coffee and mince pies. If these simple steps are carefully adhered to, you will find everyone is happy and smiling!

Most of us would recognise this recipe as an ideal experience. However, on December 2 last year we woke up early to find that the weather was not as good as we wanted. During the journey to Tenterden we wondered if we were being a little foolish in embarking on such an event – with the rain bucketing down. I was forced to make a 'comfort stop' en route – in the rain.

Upon arrival at the London Beach Hotel, we were very impressed with the grandeur of the place. We hurried into reception so as to keep as dry as possible, not realising then just how large the golfing complex was. We all had plenty of time to enjoy a cup of coffee and meet some of our fellow walkers before all going outside to don our waterproofs – as it was still raining. Neal, our leader, gave us a briefing and a dozen of us – plus one dog – set off in his wake. Going across the golf course we could appreciate what a lovely setting this must be, especially if it would stop raining. I am afraid I cannot remember exactly where we went or how many stiles we clambered over, but I can tell you it never stopped raining. I do remember that the little dog was called Poppy and she was either pushed under or lifted over the fences and stiles, but she was always enthusiastic and was very well-behaved.

Two of our number did have to take the short cut that Neal had allowed for, because without waterproof trousers, they became very wet as the rain was relentless. On our return to the hotel, we were directed to two very large and well-equipped changing rooms. Hot showers and towels were made available for our use – what luxury, as I am sure you can guess, it was still raining. We then joined other diners for a pre-lunch drink. Most of them had not braved the elements for the walk, and there was a bit of good-natured banter as to why they “chickened out.”

Next came lunch, taken in a lovely dining room overlooking the golf course. The staff were very efficient and friendly and the food was excellent. I think we were all pleased with the high quality and quantity of the three-course lunch, which was rounded off with coffee and mince pies.

As someone who does not gamble, you can imagine my surprise when, unusually, we were each given a raffle ticket (including the staff). What a wonderful way to end a delightful day, and guess what? It had stopped raining!

Please book us in for next year because I cannot believe you could get better all-round service and value for money anywhere. Well done for organising such a great event. Thank you.

FAMILY LUNCH WALK

By Neal O'Rourke

I HAD a head count at the start of this last year's walk to find that a few had bottled out, as it were, from the expected number. No doubt put off by the gloomy forecast. Anyway 13 brave souls and I set off across the golf course, soon to turn left into the weather. It was a blustery, wet morning, as we headed for Tenterden railway station. We then swung away with the wind and rain behind us, now crossing fields to soon be above a stream and then reach a track. At this point two of our party decide to make their own way back with a map which I had supplied, as I had anticipated that this might happen.

Off again, to later be confronted by a ploughed field - probably a sigh of relief for some that we were going round the edge. And then a short drinks stop with limited shelter. Soon diagonally across yet more fields, with driving heavy rain, fortunately coming from behind us. Eventually we reached a very busy road and finally turned back to London Beach.

As you might expect, there were excellent facilities for us as we were very wet now - hot showers and also towels at our disposal. GREAT !!!

Editor's note: Kent Group members will be very pleased to learn that it has been decided to book the same venue again for this year's Christmas lunch. It will be held on Sunday December 7 – so put that date in your diaries.

WALKING IN LANCASHIRE

WE have been contacted by East Lancs LDWA with a view to Kent Group members having a weekend of walking in Lancashire, probably in the early part of next year. The plan would be to travel up on a Friday, then spend the Saturday and Sunday morning walking before returning to Kent. The weekend would be hosted by East Lancs Group, but we would have to pay for our own accommodation. If anyone is interested in this idea, please contact secretary Bill Gillibrand on the above telephone number or e-mail address.

CHRISTMAS CRUISE AROUND CALAIS - December 8 By Graham Smith

THIS was certainly a Christmas Cruise to remember – or more accurately to forget.

The weather forecast for Saturday December 8 was, frankly, awful – torrential rain, storm-force winds, with the likelihood of the ferries being delayed. And on the day the weather was, actually, awful – torrential rain, storm-force winds, and the ferries were delayed. Well, we can't say we hadn't been warned.

A couple of people had courteously telephoned me during the week to say that in view of the forecast, they didn't really fancy it. The problem for those who went – Mike Pursey, Alan Sutton, Jeff Tyrell and myself – was that we had already booked our tickets, three of us weeks in advance. So the four of us turned up as planned at the SeaFrance desk at Dover's Eastern Docks at 7.15am, in the hope that the weather forecasters might be wrong.

And at first it looked like they might be. Dawn had broken to a glorious sunrise, it was dry, not very cold, and the Channel was pretty calm. We had a good crossing, and when we stepped out after reaching Calais the weather was a bit cloudy but still dry, so we dared to hope.

We walked through Calais and after the first couple of miles, just before we reached Coquelles, we got our first spits of rain. So out came the waterproofs, more as a precaution than anything else, because it really didn't look (oh, how amazingly naïve this sounds now) like it would last long.

But the spits were turning to something more persistent as we left Coquelles and started on the tracks leading us to Cap Blanc-Nez. And as we approached the Cap itself the persistent rain had become heavy, accompanied by those gale-force winds

which had been forecast. Cap Blanc-Nez, with its memorial to the Dover Patrol, is a fine viewpoint in clear conditions – indeed on exceptionally clear days you can see as far as the other Dover Patrol memorial, across the Channel at St Margaret's. But on this day, with the four of us being drenched, buffeted and blown about by the weather, we couldn't get down quickly enough – in fact in trying to get down quickly I slipped and got muddy trousers and hands to add to my other woes (another of which was numb fingers because I had neglected to bring my gloves).

We four splish-splashed along the minor road to Escalles, where we staggered into the first bar we could find. The French people there thought we were absolutely crazy (we were beginning to think that way about ourselves). Mike and I had beers, Alan had a glass of wine and Jeff had a coffee, then we re-donned waterproofs and went outside to face the elements for the trudge back to Calais.

The rain was still hammering down and the gale-force wind was still blowing, but at least we were on lower ground – for a while. The road we had to follow from Escalles to Peuplingues for a couple of miles goes up a small hill, which is very exposed, so it was a bit of a battle to remain upright, let alone make progress. We went through Peuplingues, then turned off the road to take GR (Grande Randonee) 128 to a track which would lead us back to Coquelles. After a few minutes on the GR the rain stopped, much to our amazement, and some blue sky appeared. But by then, quite frankly, we were so wet we were beyond caring.

We went into a bar at Coquelles for more beers for Mike and myself and coffee for Alan and Jeff. When we set off again Mike wanted to stop "for a couple of minutes" at the nearby Auchan hypermarket, as he wanted to buy a few beers. The "couple of minutes" turned into the best part of half an hour, as Auchan is a massive place and he had to first find where the beers were, then find the beers he wanted and then queue up to pay – but at least that meant we other three could stand in the dry and warm while we waited for him.

When we began walking again the rain had re-started, but not as heavily as before. We followed the main road into Calais, and our spirits were slightly lifted by the town's impressive displays of Christmas lights. We headed towards the docks and had another minor crisis en route when Mike needed to dispose of the two beers he had drunk at Coquelles and spent the best part of ten minutes going through his wallet and all his pockets trying to find a 20 cent coin which would enable him to use the roadside toilet. He gave up in the end, and at my suggestion disposed of those two beers in a nearby alleyway instead.

We arrived back at the docks just after 6pm, with plenty of time before our 7.30pm sailing. But our troubles were not over. The horrendous weather had disrupted the ferries and played havoc with the schedule of crossings. We were at first told our ferry would not leave until 9pm, so we went upstairs to the café and had coffees while we dried and thawed out. Later we were told the ferry would not depart until 11pm. We went downstairs to the departure lounge at 7.15pm, and our ferry eventually sailed at 9.10pm and got back to Dover at 10.20pm English time, which is an hour behind French. It was the end of day which will probably give four Kent Group members nightmares for several years to come.

Finally, I must give credit to Alan. Firstly, because he wore shorts for the walk – and his legs drew some glances of admiration (or was it bemusement?) from one of the French stewardesses as we boarded the SeaFrance ferry. Secondly, despite the horrendous experience in France Alan was up the following morning to lead a 10-mile walk for the White Cliffs Ramblers group – in weather which was just as atrocious. Now that's what I call true LDWA spirit.

Alan, I don't wear a hat but I take my waterproof top off to you, mate.

STRIDERS AND GROUP NEWSLETTERS

By Ernie Bishop

AFTER the Cleveland 100 I joined the LDWA and looked forward to taking part in group walks and, in particular, challenge walks. The Kent Group was still quite small in numbers, but Peter Rickards had arranged for the group to promote the Sevenoaks Circular for the third year in April 1977. It was hoped that some entrants would join the membership and strengthen the group.

Alan Blatchford was pleased to alter the newsletter to the smaller size of 5ins by 8.25ins, which was much more useful than the original 8.25ins by 11.75ins. The alteration in size resulted in 37 pages in issue No.12, and in two years issue No.19 had expanded to 59 pages. Now, after 30 years and 100 Striders, one or two copies have exceeded 100 pages per copy. These have usually occurred when quite a number of photos have been taken by various people in an interesting area or event. However, that is looking ahead.

Having joined the LDWA in the summer of 1976, I was pleased to walk with Chris Steer and Tony Young when I met them at the start of the Tanners Marathon (50 hilly miles on a very hot day). I soon learned a lesson. It's much easier to walk in wet, than dry hot weather. Also on a hot day to carry plenty of water and use a hat that gives protection to the back of the neck. I didn't have these items (or sense) so stopped at a checkpoint at about 35-40 miles to find some shade, and in due course had a lift back to the start.

Later, in September, I went to Windsor Great Park for several circuits, organised by British Airways. When I arrived I spoke to the person who was parked next to me, who had a difference in the way he talked. My membership number was 1691 and it turned out that his was 1708. He came from South Africa (Phil Hastings). We went to the starting point. For some reason we thought we were late and pushed off at a fair pace, but saw no sign of others. We passed several checkpoints but soon realised we had gone off too soon. We pushed on and on, reaching the starting point, so we began all over again. We enjoyed it, but were well behind the leaders. For a few years we took part together in a number of different organised events. In particular Phil and I were with Chris Barton as winners of the Leith Trophy in 1978 (in the 100km Surrey Summits). On two events,

Phil and I were part of a foursome in the High Peak Marathon, an event which can be very difficult if the weather is bad. My first group walk was an evening five-mile one organised by Peter Rickards. I met him at Westerham and we walked up to Crockenhill and back. We got to know each other and I probably saw more of him than anyone else during the early months. As it was fairly late in the season when I joined the LDWA, I only tried the two walks which I have just mentioned. I decided to enter events in the South East and ensure that I aimed to walk in interesting areas in this corner of the country. During the winter I used to walk from home in Tunbridge Wells and, at a reasonable pace, would walk over a variety of paths, timing the distances, to arrive home in late afternoon. Thinking back, I believe that those Sunday walks in the winter helped and made me want to aim a little higher, before I started to decline.

Like other members of the LDWA, one thing for me that is read as soon as it comes in the door is Strider, but in 1977 it was still called Newsletter. Each group gave a summary of their programme of events for the summer months. Kent Group had one challenge walk, the Sevenoaks Circular Walk, which Peter was going to call the Gin and Jag walk. There were also half a dozen group walks which formed the programme from March to August.

By this time most groups in the South and West had been formed, and created a series of programmes which suited their requirements.

Surrey was the home of two founder members, Alan Blatchford and Chris Steer, who were for a few years leading the way. Their wives, Barbara Blatchford and Margaret Steer, were always only too willing to help, whether it was putting the Newsletter together and dispatching it, arranging food, or undertaking any job that was needed to ensure everything went smoothly.

Looking at the Future Events for March 1977, I noticed that six pages listed events which were available. There was one event for a variety of distances in Belgium. In Holland two or three days of walking, and another five in July. A 100-mile walk in the Sefton Park perimeter at Toxteth in Liverpool. The Karrimor International (two-day mountain marathon) and three mountains in Ireland which could be climbed on different dates. Eighty-five miles round the Isle of Man within 24 hours.

Chris and Margaret Steer suggested that on the weekend of March 26-28 we join them at the AGM. It was to be held at Llangollen, in the Chain Bridge Hotel, alongside the River Dee. I remember the river flowing noisily at night, and Celia and I enjoyed the weekend. Keith Chesterton was the chairman and, together with the committee, a variety of matters were discussed and voted upon. These included the election of officers and committee, two new committee members replacing two who retired.

More to come.

NEW YEAR IN SUSSEX AGAIN

By Graham Smith

WELL, what an experience Kent Group's fourth New Year's Day walk proved – rain, quite a lot of mud, some stiff climbs, the group getting split up not once but twice, and walking the last five miles in darkness (when the 11 people still in the main party had one map and two torches between them). What's more, it is believed this walk broke the Kent Group record for the number of walkers getting split up from the leader! But – honestly – it was still an excellent day, and I wouldn't have missed it. At 9am 15 of us assembled at Rye railway station, including two members of Thames Valley Group and one walker from Ashford who had never walked more than 14 miles before (what a day she was to have!) Leader Mike Pursey had devised a very good route which initially went out by the Royal Military Canal, past Camber Castle to the sea. We then took the sea wall, and that's where the rain started. It was never more than drizzle, but it remained with us – on and off (and more on) for the rest of the day.

The sea wall was followed to Cliff End, after which we had an easy ascent before dropping down to Fairlight and then a steep ascent to the former coastguard station, where the clouds prevented the views from being as good as they usually are.

After that it was only three-and-a-half miles to Hastings, but we had the three glens to tackle, and not only are they steep, but the rain had made them muddy, so they were hard going. But we all plodded on, and reached Hastings shortly before 1pm.

Then we split up for lunch, some of us going to our usual watering hole, the Hastings Arms, the others making their own arrangements. We had planned to meet by the lift shaft at East Hill by 2pm, and that was when the afternoon fun started. Leader Mike was not able to finish his pub lunch by 2pm so the rest of us waited until ten past before setting off – without our leader. But we walked at a leisurely pace, and Mike caught us up halfway along Barley Lane.

We were now on the 1066 Trail, and it was delightful – a really good, well-waymarked route with fine, clear views. And then came our first major problem of the afternoon. We were getting a bit strung out, and the first 11 of us followed a turning right on the 1066 Trail – which the other four, who were some way behind, missed. It soon became apparent that these four had gone by, so the 11 members of the advance party regrouped at the next major turning while Mike rang Gordon Harker – one of the four missing ones – on his mobile. Contact made, it wasn't long before Gordon and the other three came striding up to rejoin us.

After that there were more very pleasant paths to Pett, and our usual second pub stop on this walk – the Royal Oak. But after that came the second major problem of the afternoon. Foolishly, 11 members of the group decided to move on before leader Mike had come out of the pub and given us the order to move. For some reason some of us (who should have known better) seemed to think we had to follow the lane from the pub further than we usually did as a short cut. Well, the lane brought us to a farm, and someone who lived there came out and told us we were off our route. There was no sign of Mike, Neal and Jan

O'Rourke and Trevor Hills, so we went back along the lane to our usual turning. Mike and the others had obviously gone on, and the problems for we remaining 11 were that A) it was by now gone 4pm and dark was fast approaching, and B) there were two torches and one map between us. So I produced my map, Gordon produced his torch and a quick study told us where we were. While we still had some daylight we followed paths to another farm, from where we reckoned we could take lanes to Winchelsea and, further on, Rye.

So that's what we did, Joy Davies leading and setting her usual brisk pace as we hurried along to Winchelsea, which we reached at 5.35pm. We then had a couple of miles to Rye, and to get there we took the pathway by the A259 – a pretty dreadful route, but it was the quickest and most direct. We reached Rye at 6.20pm, and found Mike and the others. They had been there for 15 minutes.

When they had left the Royal Oak and we weren't there, they had cracked on at a good pace in the belief they were some way behind. They couldn't see us, so they thought we were moving really fast – so they moved on really faster.

Despite the problems, we had all got back safe and sound, it was a fine walk and a great start to the new year. We probably walked 23 miles, and I must pay credit to Sukai, from Ashford, who almost doubled the previous longest distance she had walked. She was very tired, but she never complained and she was laughing the whole day. She probably thinks all of us in the LDWA are mad, but there again most of us are, aren't we?

A NIGHT WALK

By Ivan Waghorn

IT was a dark and rainy night as I made my way off the hillside, glad to reach a country lane.

I was delighted when a car drew level and stopped. Without hesitating, I jumped in and closed the door. As the vehicle moved slowly off, I realised there was no one behind the wheel and that I was alone. What's more, the engine wasn't running! Terrified, I remained rooted to the spot until the lights of a pub came into view. I dived out and ran.

Once inside the pub, I was telling the other customers of the spooky experience until about ten minutes later two men came in, out of breath and wet through.

Looking round, one of them saw me and said to his friend: "Look, there's that idiot walker who got into the car when we were pushing it."

THE GREENSAND RIDGE

THE Greensand Way officially starts (or ends) at Hamstreet. But LDWA members who went on the series of GW walks two years ago, or who went on Mike Pursey's Greensand Way – The Missing Bit 20-miler in October, may recall that Mike had studied the OS map and he believes that the Greensand ridge goes on to Folkestone. Members may be interested to know that a geologist who went on one of our recent social walks has studied the area and confirmed that Mike is correct.

So that's official - the Greensand ridge does, in fact, go on to Folkestone. Don't forget, you read it here first!

POWER PACK CAN BE RECHARGED BY WALKING

THE following article appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* in February. Keith Warman kindly sent it to the editor as he felt it would be of interest to Kent Group members.

A POWER pack that generates electricity from walking around could offer a never-ending source of energy, scientists said. The simple knee-brace could be used by climbers, walkers and soldiers to provide an unlimited amount of power for keeping mobile phones or laptop computers fully charged.

It generates electricity from the natural movement of the legs during walking and promises to revolutionise the future of portable battery-powered devices.

The device 'harvests' energy from the end of a walker's step, when the muscles are working to slow the movement of the leg, in much the same way that hybrid-electric cars recycle power from braking.

Hamstring muscles slow the movement of knees, absorbing the energy of each step. The new knee-brace generator helps the muscles do this, then collects the extra energy to convert it into electricity.

By wearing the device on each leg, individuals can generate up to five watts of electricity – enough to power 10 mobile phones simultaneously or one simple computer – "without increasing their effort," says Prof Max Donelan, the main author. He is a director of the Locomotion Lab, at Simon Fraser University in Canada.

Walking quicker generates as much as 13 watts of electricity – at that rate, one minute of walking provides enough electricity to sustain 30 minutes of talk time on a mobile phone, the team reports in the journal *Science*.

Users could include powering artificial limbs, reducing the load of batteries that soldiers carry into the field, extending the battery life of implanted drug pumps and delivering electricity to remote areas of poor countries.

A DEESIDE DIARY, AUTUMN 2007 (or HOW HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN WAS INTRODUCED TO THE LDWA)

By Tom Sinclair

Sunday September 30

ROSE long before any self-respecting lark, gulped tea, left figs and apples at back door of Rose & Crown, loaded car and set off for Gatwick Airport. Overshot it on purpose to park our car and take a bus back to said airport. We had already checked in and booked our seats on the Internet but even so, having already queued for security checks (I lost sun cream but the kind man

emptied my water bottle and brought it back), we had to queue again, with other less forethoughtfully people, to check in our baggage. There was plenty of time to potter before the 8.15am flight to Aberdeen took off at 8.30am.

An uneventful flight through fine weather which lasted the rest of the day. Picked up luggage and keys of hire car before struggling with the former to find the latter in a distant car park. Drove to Aberdeen to explore part of it and get some shopping then on to Stonehaven to sniff the sea air and have lunch in a bistro before heading for The Stables, Raemoir House Hotel, Banchory, which was to be our home for the week. Watching Ireland's deplorable defeat by Argentina in the Rugby World Cup was sandwiched between two pleasant strolls around the hotel grounds, then we had boiled eggs and toast and watched the Antiques Roadshow before an early bed.

Monday October 1

It was a very lazy lark who woke us so with one thing and another, including Jenny spotting a Redstart in the conifer plantation, it was 11.30am before we set off on a walk up Scolty Hill. At least so we thought, but the route description in the book started in Banchory whereas we had driven to a car park mentioned in it. This led to a mis-reading as a right fork took us a long way downhill before the track rose gradually. Careful use of OS map and compass could have saved us a long detour and a wayside map revealed that, as I was beginning to fear, we had left Scolty Hill far behind us. However, retracing our steps after our picnic did not take nearly as long as the outward journey. We were almost back at the car when we reached the spot where we had gone wrong but decided to go on with the original plan. This time we followed the route description without difficulty but the increasingly steep gradients made us struggle to the 983 feet summit. It was a clear day and we could see for miles using the two toposcopes thoughtfully provided on either side of the tall round tower which surmounts the summit. The tower is a memorial to a General Burnett (of whose family we learned more later) and an internal spiral staircase, delivered by helicopter, had been inserted when it was restored and re-opened by Prince Charles in 1993. We decided it was not worth going up the steps just for the sake of reaching 1,000 feet but took photos before descending by a less steep gradient. On our way back to the cottage we visited the Bridge of Feugh where the tea shop was, alas, closed, but where we watched the salmon leaping, often vainly, up the falls. Tea, baths and snoozes preceded a gentle stroll to the hotel for a rather expensive, but good and impeccably served, dinner in lovely Scottish Baronial surroundings. There were fires burning in the Bar Saloon where we broached the wine (decanter with linen table napkin) and in the lounge where we had our coffee and petit fours (fudge). We had not brought a torch but a security light came on to show us the way to our cottage.

Tuesday October 2

We were up at a more reasonable hour but by the time we had breakfasted, made picnics, bought postcards and stamps and driven to the start it was 11.20am when we started walking from the Spittal up Glen Dye. It was another glorious day with the sky so clear that we could see the moon at nearly midday as we followed the meandering and undulating path up the valley. Charr Bothy was the turning point on the walk and also the signal for us to find a grassy bank by the stream to have our filled rolls etc. As we returned towards the bothy Jenny caught sight of an unusual bird on the fence. We were able to observe it through field glasses but identification was difficult as it kept flitting about. Consultation of a bird book I later found in the shop at Crathes Castle, revealed that it was probably a Brambling, one of the possibilities I had mentioned at the time. We retraced our steps for a short distance before branching off on a path which rose steadily, dropped to a bridge over a stream, rose again to the brow of a hill and then descended gradually to meet the riverside path below the bridge where we had joined it. Upstream then to said bridge and the car and home via Banchory where judicious purchases in the butcher's and delicatessen shops and Jenny's cooking resulted in a much more satisfying and cheaper meal than the previous night's.

Wednesday October 3

We felt in the mood for a more leisurely day so after breakfast, the usual chores and shopping in Banchory we headed for nearby Crathes Castle, built by the Burnett family in the 16th century on land given to the family in 1323 by Robert the Bruce. When this was mentioned by one of the guides and I said "Ah, my ancestor" she was suitably impressed. It was given to the Scottish National Trust by the family (the name has been preserved by Deed Poll via the female line in recent generations) and although the family now live in another house in the grounds, much of the family history is preserved in the form of furnishings, paintings and records in the castle. It thus retains a "lived-in" atmosphere, which is unusual in such places. As well as the shop the castle had a café and we had coffee there before our tour and soup and rolls afterwards. However, this was the only expenditure of the visit as, being National Trust members, there were no entry or parking fees for us. Presumably reciprocal arrangements exist for members of the Scottish National Trust when they visit NT places in England, Wales and N. Ireland.

We decided to leave the castle gardens to another day and the afternoon was devoted to reading, writing and pottering round the hotel grounds and the evening to bangers and mash and The Bill and News on television.

Thursday October 4

We were ready for a good walk and the weather was still fine, though slightly overcast, as we drove up the Dee valley to Ballater and beyond up a tributary valley into the heart of the hills to park where the road comes to an end just before Loch Muick. As we walked along the east side on our planned circuit of the loch, Jenny spotted two Land Rovers driving along the track on the far side towards a hunting lodge which, as I recalled had Royal connections. We were near Balmoral Castle so we wondered? Later we met a couple walking round the loch in the opposite direction who reported a siting at the lodge of a lady in headscarf and tweed skirt surrounded by Corgi dogs.

Proceeding round the lochhead after a late picnic lunch we became aware of dogs barking and before long they were yapping

around us and sniffing (but not biting) our ankles. We followed the dogs, and the equerry (?) who had lifted a rather portly one on to it, over the plank bridge where we could see a familiar looking figure in headscarf and long macintosh, two similarly-dressed ladies-in-waiting and a plain-clothes policeman(?) a short distance away. I spoke to the dogs and Jenny to the handsome equerry before the Queen came forward to apologise for her noisy dogs – “they are so rude” she said. I said I had been used to my Aunt Daisy’s Corgis so they did not worry me. Her Majesty then enquired about the Kent Group badge on my sweatshirt and was told a little about the Long Distance Walkers Association. She suggested that the seven miles around Loch Muick would not be considered a long distance and we said, no, 20 or 30 miles in a day was quite normal, though no longer for me. I mentioned encountering Prince Philip at CCPR meetings, Jenny said we had thought of extending the walk up to Loch Dubh to which the Queen responded, “Oh no, you don’t want to do that, much too far”. She then said she was glad to have met us, Jenny responded suitably and we went our separate ways. Later, as we walked along the lakeside track, after passing the lodge built by Queen Victoria on someone else’s land, the Queen smiled and waved at us and other walkers as she drove one of the Land Rovers, with Corgis behind her, back to Balmoral.

Quite enough excitement for one day, we thought, but as we neared the car park, Jenny spotted again the red squirrels we had glimpsed in the morning and this time they were close enough to make it worth attempting photography with a zoom lens. Home then for baths and tea before treating ourselves to a very good meal in a small restaurant in Banchory, large steaks washed down by Cotes de Rhone, preceded by mackerel pate for Jenny and by a black-pudding and apple salad for me. We were even allowed to take home what was left in the bottle so that Jenny could have another glass after driving.

Friday October 5

Consultation of the book of walks had not revealed anything very appealing nearby so we drove up the valley beyond Ballater and parked, as recommended, at Easter Balmoral Village Hall. Going steeply uphill on tarmac to begin the walk, we paused to chat to a ‘Geordie’ lady and two children who were feeding windfall apples to a rabbit who appeared uninterested in the menu on offer. On then, but not quite so steeply, up a rutted track through woods. Partly because the map in the book does not show other adjacent paths and partly because I had not studied the OS map closely enough we went ahead instead of doing a left and right and thus found ourselves outside a security gate at the southern edge of the private part of Balmoral Estate on a tarmac track running parallel to the main road. We walked on for a bit before deciding that we had best retrace our steps and find a good spot for our lunch.

Our unplanned diversion had been downhill so after lunch we continued uphill before finding the path junction where we had gone wrong and heading back to the car. Home, via Banchory for shopping, to a good meal and World Cup Rugby on the television and so to bed at a reasonable hour.

Saturday October 6

Back to Crathes Castle for a very worthwhile tour of the gardens which are full of variety and exotic plants with glimpses of the castle from different angles. The tour was preceded by coffee and followed by lunch in the restaurant after which we browsed in the shop and made a few purchases – postcards and whisky. We then drove to the Falls of Feugh for another look and more photographs of the leaping salmon – Jenny’s video recording actually worked but salmon are undistinguishable on any of our still photos.

We had a last stroll around the grounds before Jenny popped into Banchory to buy the ingredients for supper and I began to pack. Very tasty bangers and mash, followed by cheese and wine, preceded more World Cup Rugby and an early bed.

Sunday October 7

Jenny had set the alarm on her mobile ‘phone so when we had washed, packed, had a quick cuppa and paid the bill at the hotel, we were on our way to Aberdeen Airport before 7.30am. Checked in, left the car keys at the Avis desk and waited for our flight to be called. Next came rigorous security checks (a kind lady brought on my stick which I had forgotten amidst the palaver of taking off and putting on jacket and shoes) and a further wait before boarding and taking off. An uneventful flight to Gatwick where we were met and taken by bus to pick up our own car and drive home for tea and buns.

HOME AGAIN, HOME AGAIN, JIGGETY JOG!

NOTES FROM BEDS

By Laurie Lowe

AFTER a near lifetime of living in Kent, Eileen and I moved to Bedfordshire in February 2007. We had lived in the same house all of our married life (51 years!) and everyone told us that it was to be a traumatic experience, so we decided to execute the move in a way that might reduce the inevitable hassle. Our plan was to sell the house in Kent, bank the proceeds, and move into temporary accommodation while we searched for the perfect bungalow in our chosen area of Bedfordshire. We were able to do this as our daughter and her family live in what had once been a stationmaster’s house near to the area where we wanted to settle. On the same plot of land as the station stood a building that had once been a goods office but was now converted into small, but comfortable living accommodation. So the master plan was to sell our house and move into the ex-goods office until we found our new home.

All went well and we were led to believe that we might be able to complete the sale before Christmas 2006 but it was not to be, and we spent Christmas in the old house surrounded by most of our belongings packed into cardboard boxes. In the meantime, we had found a bungalow that we liked and made an offer which was accepted. We finally moved out on February 13, put our furniture, etc. into store and moved into Jennie’s goods office. Ten days later the purchase of the bungalow was complete and we moved in on the 23rd! We left our stuff in store for three weeks while we got on with some simple re-

decorating. During this time we managed to live comfortably in the bungalow with two garden loungers, two airbeds, and a small table. This gave us the advantage of not having a lot of furniture to move around when painting walls and ceilings. Our belongings were then taken out of store when we had finished the decorating and the place began to feel like home. I then began to look around to see what the opportunities were for walking in the area. One complication that soon became apparent was that we had chosen to live right on the north-west corner of the local Landranger map. Thus, if I wished to explore to the NE, N, NW, W, or SW of Ampthill, I would need to purchase more maps. I finished up with four Landranger and four Explorer maps. This added considerably to the overall cost of moving! With all of these sheets spread out on the floor, I soon discovered that there are at least a dozen diamond-marked trails in the area.

In spite of the fact that long gone are the days when I was able to keep up with a young Keith Warman and could contemplate 26 or 30-mile brisk strolls, I decided to retain my membership of the LDWA. I contacted the Beds, Bucks & Northants Group and found that they have an excellent programme of social walks, but what particularly attracted my attention was a series of 15-mile walks. These are at regular 2-3 week intervals and always take place on a Thursday. The advantage of this is that the super fit youngsters, who might like to treat a social walk as training for challenge walks or even a Hundred, are all kept safely out of the way at work!

In addition to the BBN, there are also about five RA groups in Beds (by that I mean of course that they are in Bedfordshire, not in beds). I decided to join the Ivel Valley group, on account of their very full programme of walks. There are usually three walks each week, varying from 5 to about 13 miles. I now walk regularly with this group and I hope to be confident enough of the local geography to lead a couple of walks on the next programme. I recently managed to complete the 17-mile route of the Steppingley Step in the company of a couple of veterans of the Kent Group. They agreed to wait for me when necessary and we consequently spent plenty of time at the checkpoints. Our time was 6 hours 41 minutes, which is 33 minutes slower than my best time for the 26-mile Seven Sisters Marathon – but that was in the good old days when Keith could only admire the rear view of my marvellous legs pounding over the South Downs.

Bedfordshire has proved to be not quite so picturesque as some parts of Kent, although it has the advantage of having many more flat bits! In addition, the quality of the mud in certain areas exceeds anything that the Weald can stick to your boots – in fact it is of such good quality that they make bricks from it. There are fewer stiles to the mile than in Kent and the process of replacing stiles by kissing gates is more advanced here than in the South East. I also have the impression that there are less cross-field paths and more well established tracks which are not ploughed out each autumn. I am never sure where the county borders are. When you drive out of Kent, you pass into London, Surrey, Sussex or the sea. Here, after a few miles in any direction, we slip into Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Northamptonshire or Buckinghamshire – it's all very confusing. The satellite navigation system usually sorts it out for us so that we are able to find our way back to the house. If anyone passes this way while travelling north (or south) via the M1 or A1(M) and wishes to break a long journey, please call in. We have plenty of room for an overnight stay and you will always be welcome, but no coaches please!

NATIONAL TRAILS

BECAUSE of an error by the editor, two of the National Trails in England and Wales – the Pennine Bridleway and the Pennine Way – were accidentally left out of the list supplied by Ivan Waghorn in the last newsletter.

There are 15 National Trails in England and Wales, and the complete list, with mileages, is as follows:

Cleveland Way (109 miles), Cotswold Way (100 miles), Glyndwr's Way (135 miles), Hadrian's Wall Path (84 miles), North Downs Way (153 miles), Offa's Dyke Path (177 miles), Peddars Way/Norfolk Coast Path (93 miles), Pembrokeshire Coast Path (186 miles), Pennine Bridleway (120 miles), Pennine Way (268 miles), South Downs Way (100 miles), South West Coast Path (630 miles), Thames Path (184 miles), The Ridgeway (87 miles) and the Yorkshire Wolds Way (79 miles).

Sorry Ivan!

FAMILY DINNER 2008 — Another reminder, there is room for a bumper attendance.

SUNDAY 7th December has been booked at the same venue at last year, make a note in your diaries now!

COMEDY CORNER

By Bill Gillibrand

The Wind of Change

ADMONISHING a young boy, the school teacher said: "Rodney, when I was your age I was told that, if I pulled ugly faces, the wind might change and I would stay like that forever." To which the youngster replied: "Well, Miss, you can't say you weren't warned!"

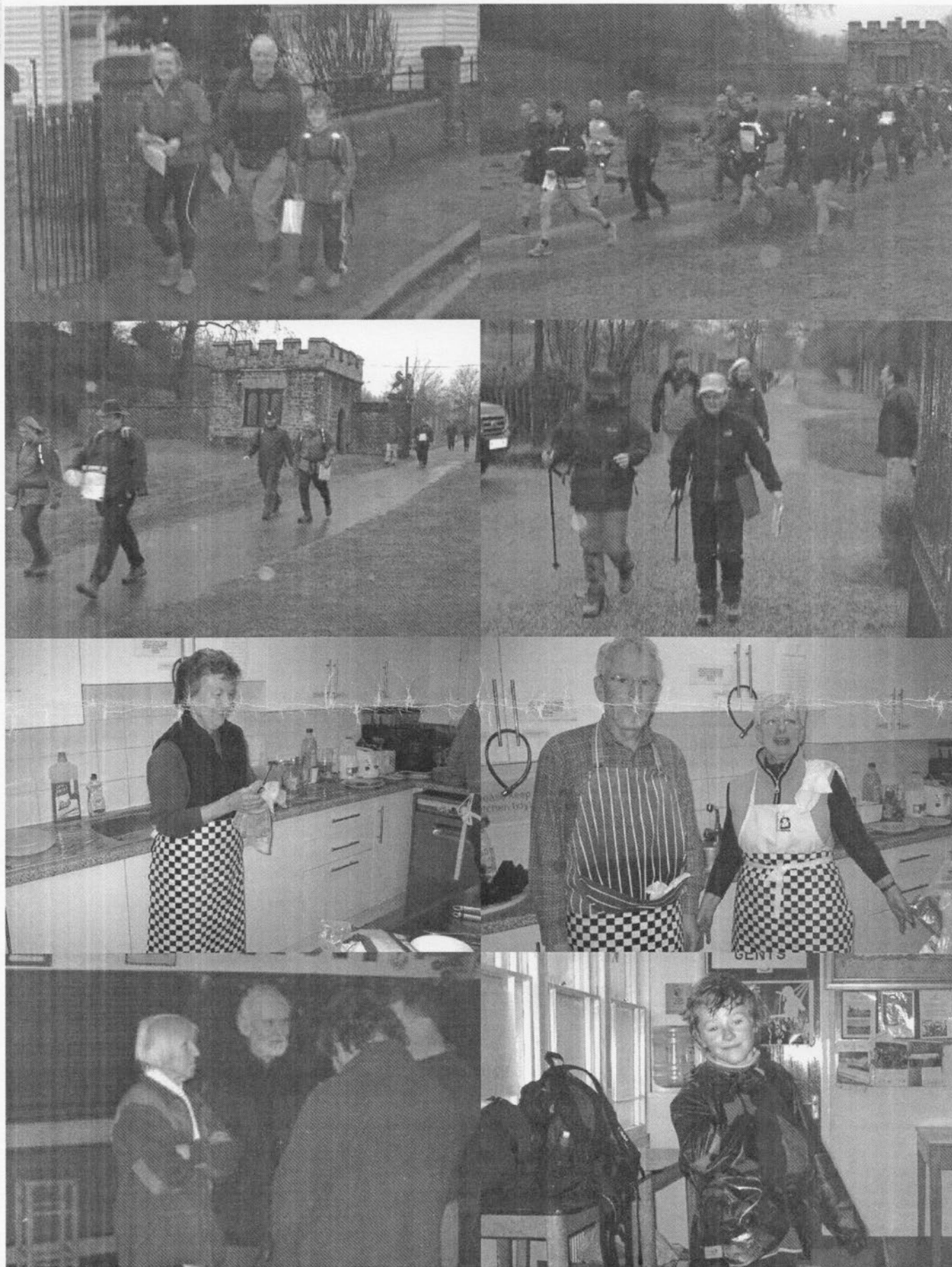
AND FINALLY

From the Editor

THANKS, as always, to everyone who has sent contributions to this newsletter. Don't forget, it's YOUR newsletter, and it needs your input. So if you want to reminisce about a challenge walk or social walk you have enjoyed (or perhaps not enjoyed), sound off about something which has annoyed or delighted you, or just make other Kent Group members laugh ☺ please send your contributions to me Graham Smith, either by post ([redacted])

or by e-mail [redacted]

Keep 'em coming!



Scenes from the 2008 Sevenoaks Circular Walks