



LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION

Kent Group

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

NEWSLETTER

No. 7



APRIL 1985

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE for 1985

Chairman Peter Barnett
Secretary Brian Buttifant
Treasurer Ted Laundon

Committee members :- Martin Bartlett Graham James
 Trevor Blake Keith Warman
 Bryan Clarke

FUTURE PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES

12/13 APRIL - North Downs Loop. 54 miles from Chilham via Canterbury, Dover and Wye. Meet at pub in Chilham Square at 10 pm.

18th APRIL - Members slide evening at the Kelsey Arms, Tunbridge Wells. Meet 7.30 for 8. Please bring your slides on walking.

27th APRIL - The Three Castles Walk. 32 miles from Cranbrook. Meet in the car park (GR 777 359) near the windmill at 9 am. Pub lunch at 'The Moor' near Hawkhurst. The walk links Scotney, Bodiam and Sissinghurst castles. Led by Mike Smith.

16th MAY - Evening walk from Ide Hill. Meet at car park south of village, (GR 489 517) at 7.15 pm. Led by Laurie Lowe.

19th MAY - Hever Hike part 2. A 20 mile walk from the car park near the village hall. GR 475 447. Leader Nick Woollett. Meet at 9 am.

16th JUNE - White Cliffs Walk. Meet at 1, Webbs Close, Folkestone (on right immediately after roundabout at end of M20. GR 212 373. A walk of 20 miles followed by a barbecue at Graham's house.

21st JULY - Multi-Interest Mystery Tour. 22 miles from Groombridge station. Meet at 8.45 am. for a walk which includes a ski slope, rock-climbing, the Loch Ness monster and Poo Sticks! Led by Laurie.

10/11 AUGUST - Wealden Waters Marshals walk. 100 km from the Pantiles, Tunbridge Wells. Meet 9 am. Phone T. Wells [redacted] before end of July if interested. Leader Mike Smith. Support possible.

Further details of any of the above activities or any group enquiry to the Secretary [redacted], [redacted]

HELP ! - More items are needed for the Newsletters. We would like to produce three issues per year, but it does depend on the amount of copy received. The articles in this edition are good examples of what is required. Other ideas are very welcome - reports, comments, opinions, book reviews, controversy - anything to do with walking. It can be three lines or three full pages. If you feel like producing walking's version of "War and Peace" (volumes 1 and 2) then we will serialise it for you. Get scribbling!!

LDWA KENT GROUP - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

St. Edith Hall, Kemsing

27th January 1985

PRESENT:- Laurie Lowe (chairman), Brian Buttifant (secretary), Ernie Bishop (treasurer), Bryan Clarke, Trevor Blake, Charlie Heather, Ian & Debbie Waddell, Dave Cowley, Keith Porter, Peter Rickards, John Probert, Michael Harmer, Derek Songhurst, Ron Roweth, Peter Barnett, Graham James, Derek Smith, Ted Laundon, Don & Ian Scott, Martin Bartlett, Nick Woollett, Mike Smith, Margaret Moore, Keith Warman, Harry Bishop, John Stew, Roy & Win Warman, Ken Nottage, John Skinner, Nigel Smetham, Mike Attewell, Andrew Melling, Jack Burgoyne.

APOLOGIES:- Peter McLean, Derek Vine.

MINUTES of the 1984 AGM were approved by the Committee as instructed by the AGM and circulated to all members.

MATTERS ARISING - None.

PROPOSED CONSTITUTION The Chairman thanked Bryan Clarke and Andrew Melling for their preparation of the draft document. He then spoke of the need to have a set of guidelines by which the group can conduct its business. The Chairman then proposed to read through the document section by section and taking any discussions and amendments as decided by the meeting.

Items 1, 2, and 3 were accepted without discussion.

4. Management.

- a) Peter Barnett proposed that "Chairman" be added and in all other relevant sections where club officers are mentioned. This was seconded by Mike Smith. This was put to the vote and the motion was carried.
- b) This was modified accordingly.
- c) Agreed.
- d) Reference to the election of the Chairman being by Committee was deleted to comply with 4a.
- e) Agreed.

5. Annual General Meeting.

- Items a, b, and c were agreed with the addition of "Chairman" as previously agreed in 4a.
- d) To read "maximum number", proposed by Mike Smith, seconded by John Skinner. This was put to the vote and carried.
 - e) Agreed.
 - f) Don Scott, Peter Barnett seconded, that this section be deleted as it is covered by 4e. Carried.
 - g) This then became the new (f). Mike Smith proposed and John Skinner seconded, an amendment "To consider any proposal which has been submitted in advance and any other business relevant to the Group. This amendment fell.
- A second amendment was proposed by Ron Roweth and seconded by Peter Barnett, as follows:- "To discuss any other competent business". This was carried.

6. Special General Meeting.

An addition to this item was proposed by Graham James and seconded by Dave Cowley as follows:- "No other business will be discussed at such a meeting". This was carried.

7. Notice and Conduct of Meetings.

- a) Agreed.
- b) After much discussion as to whether or not the Chairman should have a vote, Dave Cowley proposed and Ted Laundon seconded an ammendment which reads "The Chairman shall only have a casting vote". This was carried.
- c) Agreed.
- d) It was proposed by Graham James and seconded by Ernie Bishop that this be ammended to read - "... voting at a General Meeting", and that section 13(ii) from the national constitution be added.
- e) and f) were agreed without ammendment.

The following items, taken from the national constitution, were added to the Group constitution:-

8. Funds

Laurie Lowe proposed and Brian Buttifant seconded that "All funds, except petty cash, belonging to the Group shall be deposited with a Bank and/or a Building Society in an account which shall be operated by cheques signed by two of the office bearers. The financial year shall run from January 1st to December 31st". This proposal was carried.

Laurie then proposed and Graham James seconded, that "All reasonable expenses necessarily incurred in connection with the Group's business by office bearers and members of the committee, shall be paid out of the Group funds at the discretion of the committee. Except where approved by the committee, travelling expenses shall not be eligible for reimbursement". This was carried.

9. Interpretation

Proposed by Peter Barnett and seconded by John Skinner, that the following be included:- "In the event of any disagreement arising as to the interpretation of any parts of this constitution, a decision of a General Meeting of the Group on the matter shall be final". This was carried.

10. Dissolution

Proposed by Ron Roweth, seconded by John Skinner to read:- "In the event of dissolution of the Group, any remaining funds shall be transferred to the Long Distance Walkers Association". Carried.

11. Other Matters - Agreed.

The Chairman then proposed that the Constitution be accepted by the meeting, Andrew Melling seconded. The proposal was accepted.

SECRETARY'S REPORT The Secretary told the meeting that since it was now 9.50 pm, he would make a brief report only.

The Group has had a good year ending with a membership of 93. We have had a social walk each month and these have been well supported. Two slide evenings were held in Spring and Autumn and our first Tuesday gatherings at The Bricklayers Arms, Chipstead remain popular. The Christmas family lunch ramble again attracted almost 50 members and families to 'The Spinning Wheel' at Westerham Hill.

In newsletter number 3, he wrote about the Luddesdown Inquiry, this was concerned with land that had been bought by the Ministry of Defence for practise minelaying near the village of Luddesdown. A local action group had been formed to oppose this, and he was asked to speak in their support at the inquiry. The Inspector, in his report to the Department of the Environment, had recommended that the area be preserved for the enjoyment of the public. This good news broke early this year.

Finally he told the meeting that Laurie Lowe would not be seeking re-election as Chairman and he paid tribute to the way Laurie had shown a strong commitment to the Group and his office, which was an example to us all. This was to the benefit of the Group and his continued support, advice and drive would be greatly welcomed.

TREASURER'S REPORT Copies of the financial statement were handed to members. An explanation of the figures was then given to the meeting by Ernie Bishop. Dave Cowley proposed acceptance of the report and Andrew Melling seconded. This was carried.

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN, SECRETARY AND TREASURER The nominations listed below had been received by the Secretary prior to the meeting.

Chairman - Peter Barnett
Secretary - Brian Buttifant
Treasurer - Ted Laundon

There being no other nominations, the above were duly declared elected.

DETERMINATION OF NUMBER OF COMMITTEE The Chairman proposed and Martin Bartlett seconded that, including the three officers, the committee should be eight in number. This was accepted by the meeting.

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE The following nominations were received:-

Martin Bartlett	Margaret Moore
Trevor Blake	Mike Smith
Bryan Clarke	Keith Warman
Phil Hastings	Graham James

A ballot was held and the following were elected to fill the five committee positions:- Martin Bartlett, Graham James, Trevor Blake, Keith Warman and Bryan Clarke. The count showed a tie for fifth place between Trevor Blake and Margaret Moore. Margaret agreed to stand down.

MEMBERS NEWS AND VIEWS

Ron Roweth mentioned that this year the Surrey Summits event will have an award for the group with the most walkers finishing in the time limit. He therefore urged members to enter to boost our chances of success.

John Probert pointed out that as regular users of footpaths, there should be some commitment by the Group to footpath clearance work. The committee agreed to consider such work, linked perhaps to a Group event.

Mike Smith reminded members of the next Group walk - February 17th, from Canterbury West Station.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 10.45pm.

The above minutes were approved by the new committee at their first meeting held on 7th March, as laid down in the constitution.

"IN SEARCH OF THE E4"

Ron Roweth

Having to take a holiday in mid-September meant that I would be on my own, but also that I could please myself and would have no booking problems. An old leaflet about long-distance walking routes in Europe gave lots of ideas and the E4 route seemed most attractive.

This footpath from the Pyrennees to the border of Hungary is over 2000 km long, so there's lots of choice for a hill walking holiday, either in Switzerland, Bavaria or Austria. The guide book for the eastern half of the footpath arrived too late to get a proper translation, but the obvious place to start appeared to be Salzburg. The final section (25 days!) through Austria starts from there; it's easy to get to from London, and Inter-City Europe have a special offer!

I had thirteen days available, so the simple thing seemed to be to walk eastwards along the E4 for seven days, then transfer (by a two-hour walk) to a parallel variant of the route higher in the mountains, then do six days westwards, with a railway or bus back to Salzburg never more than half a day's walk away.

Things never work out as easily as that, even on the best planned of expeditions, and this one was virtually unplanned. Arriving at Salzburg I had that same feeling of foreboding experienced at the start of some recent LDWA hundreds - it was teeming with rain, and even trying to find which is North in the middle of a wet, deserted and unknown city was taxing a brain befuddled by too little sleep. It was eight hours in the guide book to the end of the first day's walk and there were only seven hours of daylight left, so the only thing to be done was to get the waterproofs on and get going.

The route description soon began to make a little sense, although it was too precious to be kept out of the sack for many seconds in the heavy rain. A bigger problem, once out of the city and into very steep forest, was the route markings (or lack of them). In what was in any case a rather hard first section beginning with a climb of almost 3000 ft up to the local TV transmitter, I managed to go off course many times, was quickly wet through despite the new Goretex, and even got quite cold on the bare hilltops, but amazingly reached the first village, (three miles from the end of the section) by 6pm and found some digs just as it was getting dark.

Thirty six hours later, when the rain finally stopped and my gear had dried out, the holiday began again. The weather improved gradually, with hazy sunshine in the valleys just warm enough for comfortable walking, but the hills stayed misty, with none of the picture postcard views of distant mountain ranges. Long forest sections were followed by quiet lanes and small hamlets and then by holiday villages in the popular Salzkammergut lake district. The only English people I met on the walk were on the top of a mountain, above the resort of St. Wolfgang and connected by steam railway. Only in one section, where the route traversed a small mountain range, were there any other walkers, and the mountain huts were almost deserted, except for day visitors.

Four fine days were followed by a wet, cold weekend, with snow down to about 1200 metres. This brought the 'planning' to an end, as I'd reached the point of transfer to the westward route, and this involved crossing a pass at 2000 metres. Another route back wasn't difficult to work out though, and could be changed easily if the weather improved. The second week turned out to be cooler and showery, with the last full day giving the only fine, warm and clear weather of the holiday. This was very disappointing, as previous walking holidays in September had all been blessed with excellent weather.

Route finding was easiest in the mountains and forests, once I got used to the local variations of the route number. Getting out of a town or village was sometimes difficult, however, and many a track junction had no

sign or marking at all. The route descriptions in the guide book were hardly up to LDWA standards - usually two pages and a sketch map for each day - but after a time to get used to things, progress in roughly the right direction was not too hard.

The countryside followed by the route was varied and always interesting. The mountains were limestone, so water had to be carried, but the paths were never difficult. The forests were very extensive and superb, being mainly larch and pine, with not a spruce or conifer to be seen; the tracks and paths through the forests were excellent for walking, although you have to be able to enjoy your own company for a whole day on occasions. There doesn't appear to be any custom of walking over farmland, however, and the route follows lanes and even a main road at times.

Accommodation was hardly ever a problem - there were plenty of inns and B & B's in the towns and villages and alpine club huts in the mountains. Relying on the guide book for information about the forest areas caused the only difficulty, but local people always seemed to know which places were open. Digs were always good and by English standards very cheap - the same goes for food and drink, unless you dislike the local lager.

It was very different from walking the popular alpine trails - the scenery not so spectacular; no noisy, crowded dormitories in the huts; the going much easier, but the route finding much chancier; the choices of food and digs often much better. For me it was a new kind of holiday and most enjoyable - and for those of us who no longer have the energy to carry a heavy sack over the big alpine passes, walking routes like the E4 provides an excellent alternative for a holiday in the hills.

LDWA AGM - FOLKESTONE - 9/10th March 1985

The Kent Group was well represented at the National AGM, held this year at Folkestone. Probably because of its location - tucked away in the SE corner of England - representatives from the northern groups were sparse.

The main business of the weekend was conducted at the Southcliff Hotel during Saturday afternoon, and this was followed in the evening by an excellent meal and after-dinner speech by Alan Mattingly of the R.A.

Graham James had devised two local walks of 6 and 12 miles for the Sunday morning. The group for the longer distance set off from the hotel at about 9.30 and headed along the promenade westwards to Sandgate and then inland and up onto the North Downs, to turn eastwards back along the NDW towards Folkestone.

By superb timing, we met up with the short distance group (who had stopped for coffee at Graham's!) and were now struggling up the steepest route to Ceasar's Camp as we arrived at the summit via the 'easy' route. The combined party were then able to walk together for the couple or so miles to the "Valiant Sailor" where an excellent cold buffet awaited us in the bar. This proved very convenient - no waiting for orders to be prepared - just straight in, order a pint and start eating!! As numbers were slightly less than anticipated, there was plenty of food for all and members with long distances to travel were encouraged to stock up for the journey home.

After lunch, the route took us back down past the Warren and later the Harbour, to finish back at the hotel. Two people from Kent were observed sneaking into the cliff lift to get back to the hotel with a minimum of effort!

LAL



LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION

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

Mr. Laurie Lowe
Kent Group

Sue Coles,
Hon. Sec.,
[REDACTED]

13th March 1985

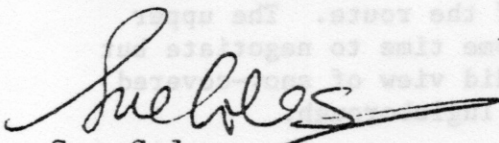
Dear Laurie,

I was not sure to whom I should send this letter as I know that you, Peter Barnet and Brian Buttifant and other Kent group members were instrumental in arranging the walks on the Sunday.

On behalf of the Committee I should like to thank all Kent group members for their support and in particular the generosity the group displayed in settling the Sunday lunch bill. Although just on your doorstep, so to speak, I was very appreciative of the fact that so many Kent members turned up for the AGM itself particularly as numbers were a little down on previous years.

Please pass on our thanks to all those involved. No doubt our paths will cross in the not too distant future and I should like to wish the Kent group a successful walking year.

With best wishes


Sue Coles
Hon. Sec.

REPORTS OF PAST EVENTS

2nd December - The GATLIFFE MARATHON (G.M.= Groggy & Muddy)

A large contingent of Kent Groupers set off on the 50Km of the first Gatliffe Marathon on Sunday 2nd December 1984. Shortly after the start we had a brief period of drizzle and in the afternoon a spell of cold and heavy rain. The route was excellent with long stretches off roads. The conditions, however, were diabolical. Mud, mud and more mud made the going very strenuous indeed and most entrants would, I think, agree that the Gatliffe was the most tiring event they could remember.

Bryan Clarke

THE THREE PEAKS WALK IN WINTER

David Sheldrake

We were a little apprehensive as we drove into Horton-in-Ribblesdale on the afternoon of 11th January. Although the sun was shining, the whole landscape was covered with a generous layer of snow and the previous week the south east had seen some of its worst weather and heaviest snow storms for two or three years.

Three of us from the Kent group, John Probert, Colin Harris, and myself were attempting the Three Peaks walk and after booking in for bed and breakfast at Studfold House, we made a brief excursion "up the hill" to get a look at the first section of the route up Pen-y-Ghent. As darkness fell we returned to the car to prepare our evening meal of soup, baked beans and corned beef, which was cooked and eaten under the stars in below freezing temperatures. Colin managed to spill most of his beans and I had trouble cutting the corned beef which was nearly frozen. However that evening we adjourned to the pub at Helwith Bridge and warmed our limbs in front of a blazing fire.

Next morning we were up early and after breakfast, set off from the Pen-y-Ghent cafe in fairly clear conditions. We reached the top of Pen-y-Ghent in an hour and twenty minutes, being overtaken by a fell runner just before the top. After a short rest we were off again, taking the track past Hull Pot crossing the river and several boggy areas which fortunately were all frozen over. Passing through Ribbleshead we then began the long tedious climb up Wharfedale which was probably the most tiring section of the route. The upper slopes had some fairly deep snow and this took quite some time to negotiate but eventually we arrived at the summit which gave a splendid view of snow-covered hills in all directions, including our next objective, Ingleborough.

By now it was nearing closing time and the thirsty three made a speedy descent in the direction of the Hill Inn, where pints of lemonade and lime were downed before we resumed our way towards the third and last peak. Once again the final escarpment gave us quite a bit of difficulty, being covered in snow and ice. John and Colin both donned crampons here but even so it was nightfall by the time we reached the top. We could see the lights of Ingleton shining far below but only remained a few minutes before retracing our steps as it was beginning to get very cold.

At this point we lost the path in the darkness as it dropped beneath Simon Fell, so we continued on a compass bearing and after an hour or so struck upon two walls which were marked on the two and a half inch map. Having located our position we rejoined the path and followed it back to Horton and the Pen-y-Ghent cafe where we indulged ourselves in pint mugs of tea and burgers and chips.

The time taken was twelve hours and forty five minutes (possibly a record ?) and we all agreed it had been a tiring but very enjoyable day and hoped to repeat it in the future.

18th January - WINTER NIGHT HIKE

In spite of the bitterly cold spell of weather during the week preceding the night walk, we once again had a good turn out for this traditional mid-January activity. Nighttime temperatures as low as -12 degrees Centigrade had been recorded prior to Friday the 18th, and people turned up clad in layer upon layer of protective clothing. In the event, the weather was relatively mild, according to the thermometer strapped to the outside of Mike Smith's sac, it was only just below zero! So a calm night and a thick covering of snow made for a pleasant 24 mile ramble around the area north and east of Maidstone.

At 10-30 pm an "expectant" John Skinner led the group of about 17 walkers out from Aylesford northwards up onto the Downs. While travelling along an ice-covered lane, we came upon a stranded motorist whose car had slid into a ditch. He could not believe his luck as 17 figures loomed out of the night and manhandled his vehicle back onto the road! Progress was good, although heavy drifting along the edge of the Downs slowed progress in places, and later, on the NDW, several deeply ploughed fields caused havoc due to an evil combination of hard frozen ridges separated by deep, snow-filled furrows. We stumbled across these, turning ankles and cursing loudly.

We had an early morning (2-30 am !) break in the churchyard at Cuxton without unduly disturbing the inhabitants. At Holly Hill we descended the steep slope of the Downs in a fairly exciting and uncontrolled manner and then worked our way south to West Malling, then through East Malling and back to Aylesford.

Our thanks to John for planning and leading the walk and also to his wife Christine, who managed to delay their 'happy event' long enough for him to take part in the walk! Congratulations to them both on the birth of their daughter Jasmine.

Laurie Lowe

10th February - The PUNCHBOWL MARATHON

A number of Group members took part in this Surrey event, here is a report from one who did not !

NEARLY, BUT NOT QUITE, THE PUNCHBOWL MARATHON

I didn't do the Punchbowl this year. I was in for it, I had a number, but.....! On the Sunday morn in question, I had the remains of a cold, the snow lay thick upon the ground and the weather man the night before said it would be -4 or -15 degrees depending on the wind chill factor next day. I stayed in bed and settled for civilized tea and watched the trees bend in the Arctic wind outside.

Monday the 11th - Pangs of guilt set in, decided to take an outstanding day's leave tomorrow and do the Punchbowl.

Tuesday the 12th - 7.49 am. Gear on, map and directions in hand, off I set from Witley (two days late!) The sun climbed a little higher and shortly shone brightly upon the snowy landscape. A couple of dogs snapped at my heels, I fended them off with my stick and followed the trampled ice-bound trail of Sunday's people. No wind, a blue sky, sharp and chill the day but Oh what joy to be alone, walking and all day to wander. Crash! A deer leapt away to my right and startled me. Took the gloves off in a fire-break three miles out and a mile later realized I had lost my compass, usually worn over the gloves. Oh calamity! - and with many a bearing to follow. Waste of time turning back and

as the sun was out and high, I decided to steer by that.....Now does it set in the west or.....?

At Barfold Farm a lady peeped out and said "You having a nice brisk walk?" "Um, Ah, Ah!" I said having plodded my way laboriously through the foot thick drifts covering Sunday's tracks in the previous fields. Any open gate or break in the hedge and the snow had drifted making it very hard work.

7.8 miles and turn off track for "view". Now this is the first time I've seen anything from this viewpoint. In previous years it's usually been raining or misty when I've got there. Today's scene was picturesque, snow-covered fields and farmlands with trees and hedges blackly peeping through.

Checkpoint 1 (coffee, soup or lemon) - not today friend. A couple of miles further on I sat down on a horse jump and had my own soup and bread and cheese repast. Left some bread for the birds, went through a noisy farm-yard, made friendly noises to a doleful looking spaniel and crossed into Hampshire.

Over the A3 and later down besides the Waggoners Wells Ponds. Not a soul around - strange, when so many people spend their weekends here. Then back up into Surrey and around the Punchbowl, stopped at the cafe, had two mugs of tea, rested the old feet and then chomped on down to Hindhead Youth Hostel at 19 miles.

The afternoon was now wearing on so I decided upon a quick 'smash' across country to the finish. This meant ignoring Kettlebury Ridge but by this time I was fed up with floundering through the white stuff. I picked up the Surrey Summits route, had a conversation with a retired bank manager just going out to feed a pony and slid and skated on an ice-bound road to my car, about 24 miles done in the day.

I missed the urgent stride of Sunday's walkers but mine was a nice day, a cold, bright, lovely day spent in a solitary way with winter in the Surrey countryside.

Harry Bishop (4734)

17th February - KENT MILLS AND MARSHES

This was another of Mike Smith's walks gleaned from Roger Smith's book "Weekend Walks". A good number of group members assembled at Canterbury West station by 9-30 and waited in a biting cold N.E. wind. At 10-30 British Rail eventually delivered our leader to us after delays and diversions caused by works on the line ! Thus we set off briskly to get warm and to make up lost time.

A flat but interesting route, with plenty of snow still underfoot, led us through Fordwich, Stodmarsh and the Nature Reserve to the inn at Grove Ferry. Here we took the usual refreshments in pleasant surroundings. The afternoon saw us returning via a slightly more hilly route through Wickhambreaux to Canterbury. At one point Mike (Duke of York) pretended to get lost just so that he could march us up to the top of the only hill for miles around and then march us down again!

An interesting walk in an area rarely visited by most of our group, but one worthy of further exploration.

Laurie Lowe

1st March - THE HIGH PEAK MARATHON - as undertaken by the "KENGURUS" team.

(Peter Rickards, Keith Porter, John Probert, Laurie Lowe)

Should one wish to walk the 'High Peak Marathon', the pre-Christmas drinks evening is the time to ask around the Kent Group, as this is the time when fellow members will agree to anything. Casually asking Peter if he would like to join me with two other members of his choice, he suggested Laurie and Keith as the other members of the team. All too soon the big day was with us and we assembled at Edale village hall on the 1st of March for an 11-06 pm start.

The shock of pounding up to Hollins Cross with fog and drizzle put a stop to most of the banter that I had to put up with from the start of the journey from Kent. Cards were punched and Lose Hill was very soon in sight. On again, but now downhill, very steep with snow and much cursing and falling on one's rear, only to slide into an upright position and press on, catching up with the others in the team and getting a lift from their enthusiasm. Onto the road and in a while we cross a railway viaduct (illegally perhaps) to pound to the top of Win Hill and then into a plantation, and downhill again on a very nasty path of mud, stones, large rocks, tree roots and snow to Yorkshire Bridge. Here we were passed by the last team to start and the eventual winners.

No time to think, must get on to CP5 and 6, a long drag but pleasant as the moon is trying to come out. At CP7 the rhythm of the walk has taken over and one only had to cope with the cold. Fast now along Derwent Edge with a clear sky and a near full moon and a good path flattened out by many feet through the night. Out onto Howden Moors to CP8 and across Featherbed Moss. The pains are really with us now (or with me at least) and there is more barracking, like "Whose idea was this?" and "Get the fool tight next time and keep his mouth shut!"

On to Margery Hill, Outer Edge, Swains Head and Bleaklow Stones - a hard, grinding slog for miles in peat, mud, snow and the ever present cold water, mostly ankle deep, the like of which is beyond description. You must experience it to believe it! The team is going well now, the route description compiled by Keith was up to scratch and with the combined map work, we were all doing well and were all in good spirits (brandy and ginger wine - supplied by Peter!) until we became disorientated and missed a checkpoint. Stupid but excusable after so many miles and so many hours. Keith, being the true orienteer, spotted the mistake before too much time was lost and a quick back-track saw us at CP13 (lucky 13?) with only cold water to drink.

On again to follow the Pennine Way to the Snake road and a very warm welcome (large tent, hot dogs, tea and cake) with a spot check for equipment. Don't get caught out without any of the compulsory items to be carried. No time to linger, on again following the Pennine Way at least seven kilometres of ankle deep snow, water and peat hags - up to the knees in places - to Mill Hill and then Kinder Outfall. The team are going well, but heading down Broad Clough we have taken the wrong direction towards Southend Farm and lose so much time getting back on course that we were the last team through the Edale Cross CP. The checkpoint officials were getting quite worried about us and they were to hang on until the next CP radioed that we had reached there safely. They need not have worried, I was well phsyched up and the others were going great guns. On to Brown Knoll trigpoint and away over flat ground with Cowburn Tunnel chimney as a marker to our right. Two miles from Brown Knoll and one of the team, concentrating on the map, puts a foot in a narrow peat hag that could easily have resulted in a broken leg - very easy when one is tired.

We make a beeline now with compass and catch and pass other teams on the way to CP 17. No time to waste, a quick drink with the team looking alert. A muddy footpath now to the road where we are met by Ernie and Celia with a flask of life-giving tea. Peter decided to climb the hundred steps to

the top of Mam Tor while the rest of us took the less obvious but easier way round the hill to meet up in a short time. On to Hollins Cross (CP 18) and down hill fast now to the road and back to the finish to cheers from the army, gallons of tea and a meal.

The High Peak Marathon is an experience rather than a walk. The weather had been exceptionally good to us, the comfort of knowing that there are three others in the team to give you a lift when you are feeling low and above all the organisers of the event are on their toes; at all times we found them helpful and considerate. Only three teams from Kent made the entry list this year, and The Kengurus intend to be there next year, with we hope, many more from Kent.

John Probert (524)

SEVENOAKS '85 - A PERSONAL VIEW

Laurie Lowe

Saturday - Pete Barnett had talked me into checking the route with him the day before the event proper. So we set off from Otford at 6.30 am (to be sure of finishing before dark!) in good weather conditions. As we approached Dunton Green, the sound of heavy breathing behind us heralded the arrival of Peter Rickards who had also succumbed to the invitation. Thus the three of us made very good progress round the route in what was for me an excellent time. To be fair, we were not delayed by checkpoint formalities and I did have to resort to an occasional crafty jog in order to stay with the 'hard men'.

A very swift couple of pints at the 'Blue Anchor' helped to lubricate progress during the afternoon. Luck was with us when we finished at Otford just as a hail storm broke about us. Incidentally, how many Sevenoaks regulars on Sunday noticed that the waggon wheel hoop was missing from the path up through the woods?

Sunday - The usual hustle and bustle at Raleys before the start. All the walkers got through the gate into Knole Park before 9 am this year! A heavy fall of snow made an attractive scene as over 350 walkers were sent on their way by the Mayor of Sevenoaks. This snow was soon to melt and turn the dry paths of Saturday into muddy tracks which slowed walkers as they slid and tumbled on the steep sections.

I next saw the walkers at Otford Scout Hut - the usual cheerful faces of LDWA regulars to the front of the field. A quick bite to eat and a drink and then on their way. It is surprising how long the less experienced walkers seem to spend at checkpoints.. Those who were obviously going to be hard pushed to finish in 10 hours were quite content to spend 20 to 30 minutes in the comfort of the hut.

After closing the checkpoint, we moved on to Chipstead where the Barnett / Rickard team were braving the elements to provide support for the walkers (and I gather, spending a fortune on brandy and ginger wine to combat the cold) Dusk at the Weald CP saw me picking up a few walkers who could not manage the last few miles. Then finally back to Raleys as the last stragglers came in, late, tired but triumphant - especially the three mud-caked youngsters who looked absolutely shattered but proud to have completed the challenge.

Just the clearing up to do in the hall. Collect together the lost property and stuff all the gear into the cars and away home. We had set out from home at 7 am and got back at 9 pm, - it was 10 times as tiring as the 30 mile walk of the previous day! But I expect we will do it all again next year!

This is rightly described as one of the Classic Walks, and the name itself provides all the argument needed for such an appraisal. The tour I joined was set up by the Ramblers Association, and began in France at Les Contamines, reached by air to Geneva, thence by coach. We were installed in a small hotel for the night, which suited us well enough, so it was booked for the last night of the trip. In the morning we set off up the valley, level at first but increasingly steep and wooded until we emerged above the tree line into a world of upland pasture, peaks, rock, snow and ice. We had lunch by patch of snow having climbed about 2000 feet; it was a further 2000 to the Col du Bonhomme, but the refuge - Croix du Bonhomme - was not there as I had expected. I observed "C'est le Col, mais ce n'est pas la Croix" and a girl, not of our party, grinned at this, so I wondered what her nationality was. Two kilometres of path among rocks led to the refuge, passing a memorial to one who didn't make it. The place was crowded although there were meals, and seven of us shared a communal bunk or 'bat flancs'. There wasn't even room to 'knock sides' and sleep was accordingly limited, but the loo must be one of the world's finest for its view, if one left the door open.

In the morning a short walk brought us to the Col des Fours, the more energetic ascending to the Tête Nord a few hundred feet higher, a diversion which is the highest point reached on the tour proper. From the Col it was nearly 3000 feet down to Ville des Glaciers, a hamlet with but one glacier to its credit. Over 2000 feet of ascent reared before us, but on the way we stopped for lunch at the Refuge de Mottets, where the dormitory looked cool and airy, much more inviting than the path ahead, to the Col de Seigne and Italy. On the way up I lapsed into an old habit, for some years now anyway, of counting so many paces then having a 'blow', but later on adapted to a pace that I could keep up more or less indefinitely. From the Col it was a mere 700 feet and four kilometres down to the Refuge Elisabetta, which was thronged with people, as it is possible to drive to within a short distance, but our leader had booked by phone from Les Contamines and we had a bunk each. Here too we were in a fairly spectacular setting, backed by numerous 'aiguilles' and flanked by the Glacier de la Lex Blanche.

From Elisabetta a brief descent, 1000 feet or so, was followed by two level kms of tracked flood plain, then a steep path over the Alpes de l'Arp Vielles, perhaps the only real alps we saw all trip. We found a newish chalet for summit refreshment and descended nearly 3000 feet to Dolonne; in the afternoon heat to have been climbing was just unthinkable. A cool dark cafe interior was just what we needed at Dolonne, from where we walked into Courmayeur; I could remember little of the town from thirty years before except the mountains surrounding it, and most of us caught a bus up to La Palud, 4 km or so. Here a roomy dormitory, showers and good food were our lot. A rest day was for me a chance to ascend by cable-car to the Torino refuge; on arrival Mont Blanc promptly vanished, but enough remained to be seen, including skiers on the snow-field below, to make a stay of several hours worthwhile in the hope of clearing skies; but there was to be a second chance as we shall see.

On the way over from the Elisabetta we could see the Col Ferret, our next barrier, an apparent wall at the head of the valley. As I was the slowest of the party it was agreed that I make my own way and rejoin the party, probably at Champex. So I caught a bus through the Mont Blanc tunnel to Chamonix, whence an interesting train journey followed. A change of trains was made just over the Swiss border, and the journey continued on a track perched 1000 feet or so up a valley side, with spectacular views. Further on a rack was engaged, and the descent to Matigny was like arriving by air. Another train or two brought me to Oesieres and a closed hotel with tables convenient for lunch. I caught a bus to La Fouly and found that I had arrived before the walkers, so I dumped my gear and set off to meet them. In retrospect I should have tackled the Ferret, as a little over 2000 feet of ascent was clearly a possibility, but I had an interesting day none the less. Next day we set off

down the Swiss Val Ferret, me by road, the rest by a path. The road gave the better view and traffic was almost nil, a delightful six miles followed by a steep ascent through woods to Champex where two intrepid souls dived into the icy lake. Refreshed, we trudged up to Arpette where two nights were spent. I spent my free day going up to the Fenêtre d'Arpette, a pass 3000 feet above on a route indicated in part as 'dangereux'. It was certainly interesting even without a full pack, but I omitted to do a recce down the other side. The summit gave a tremendous view of the Glacier du Trient and the valley which was our next destination. Almost back at the gîte fell the only rain of the whole trip. In the morning our leader decided the weather looked dodgy for the Fenêtre route, so I was the only one to have got there. The Bovine route was less spectacular, and began with 1000 feet of descent which seemed a pity. At Forclaz we halted at a roadside hotel, and reflected that here in comfort we were 1000 feet higher than any point in Britain. From there we followed the water supply, a leat leading towards the Trient Glacier and a very gentle ascent. At the Chalet du Glacier some wanted to walk up to the snout which could be clearly seen, but it turned out to be farther than they thought, so my offer to look after the packs suited every one. While I did so I watched a squad of Swiss soldiers practising crossing the torrent on a single wire.

The gîte at Trient was fairly basic - but 'bat flank' again and no M.P. but the village café laid on an excellent fondue, and we produced a modest breakfast after a night lulled by sheep bells. From Trient one is soon climbing through woods at a pitch that an 'airborne' view of the valley is soon achieved, and an ascent of 3000 feet in 4 km leads to the Col du Balme and welcome refreshment. It also leads to a wonderful view of the Chamonix valley and the mass of peaks and glaciers which were to be our companions, so to speak, for the rest of the trip. At the Col some French girls handed me a camera to take a shot of them, but it seemed to be jammed, and "Il ne marche pas" was the only contribution I could make. They couldn't make it 'marche' either. And so downhill to La Tour. We set off from La Tour for the Balcon du Mont Blanc and some more steep climbing; included in the ascent was another 'passage dangereux' but its perils were much reduced by strategic pieces of ironwork. We continued on up to Lac Blanc at about 7700 feet and there spent a lazy mid-day, apart from a walk around the lake, soaking up the sun and the incredible prospect of rock pinnacles, snow and glaciers spread before us. It was an easy descent to our night stop at La Flegère at just over 6000 feet. On the following morning it warmed up rapidly and after a fairly level 5 km I succumbed to the temptation of the cable-car up to Le Brevant, 8300 feet, where refreshment could be had with the best view of Mont Blanc. The mountain has been likened to 'an enormous cake covered in icing sugar' and one must concede it lacks the hard-edged drama of its neighbours. Two of our people had left us to attempt the ascent, but did not succeed due either to lack of acclimatisation or their guide deciding they were not up to it. There was less time to linger here with 5000 feet of descent to make. We stopped at a newish refuge, the Bel Achat, for 'thé citron', eventually arriving at the valley and river whose icy waters offered a brief balm to the feet. We were accommodated at Le Tacconaz in hostel type gîte and dined at a nearby hotel where I attempted to lead our troupe through 'Chevaliers de la Table Ronde'. A free day followed, and two of us caught the bus to Chamonix for a cable-car trip up the Aiguille du Midi and beyond. The ascent is in two stages and at the summit we boarded the smaller cars for the crossing to the Torino refuge. These go in convoys of three, and as they dock one comes to a periodic halt which a notice advises is convenient for photography. We got off at the Torino for another look at Italy. Returning we could see ant-like figures on rock faces and on the immense snow field below, in a world of almost unbearable visual splendour. Back at the Midi we went up the summit tower for a final look round, including the opposite ridge where we had walked for two days. I tried running on the spot, and convinced myself that at 12605 feet the air was a bit thin. This was a trip on no account to be missed, and some one pointed out that I was the only one to have done the Tour du Mont Blanc vertically. The last ascent, 2000 feet to the Col de Voza barely reaches the tree line, and from there on trees and pastures set

the scene down to the road and the last three miles into Les Contamines.

The tour is one I am glad not to have missed, ranking perhaps with Iceland on that score. Ramblers Association and Waymark Holidays organise parties staying at refuges or gîtes, but be warned - as the back gets older the pack gets heavier. Sherpa Expeditions make it a camping trip with main gear being transported. You could go it alone with the aid of a guidebook such as "Tour of Mont Blanc" by Andrew Harper (Cicerone Press, Harmony Hall, Milnthorpe Cumbria) But go anyway!

P.S. I didn't get Harper's guide until after I'd done the trip. A coincidence the author doesn't mention is that the Col des Fours and the Fenêtre d'Arpette are exactly the same height - 8743 feet. You don't wish to know that? Tough!!

Villagers win the big battle

IT'S been an historic week for the sleepy north Kent village of Luddesdown.

Campaign

For the past two years, residents have lived in constant fear of the Army arriving with its troops, tanks and mine laying equipment to set up a military training base.

But it was time to celebrate at last when the announcement came that an inspector had ruled against the Army's plans after a lengthy public inquiry.

Decision

It means the villagers can continue to lead their peaceful way of life, free from the sound of explosions and gunfire.

They have waited a year for the decision, but for the folk who mounted a huge campaign to save the village, it has all been worth it.

from the

'Dartford Leader'

5th January.