

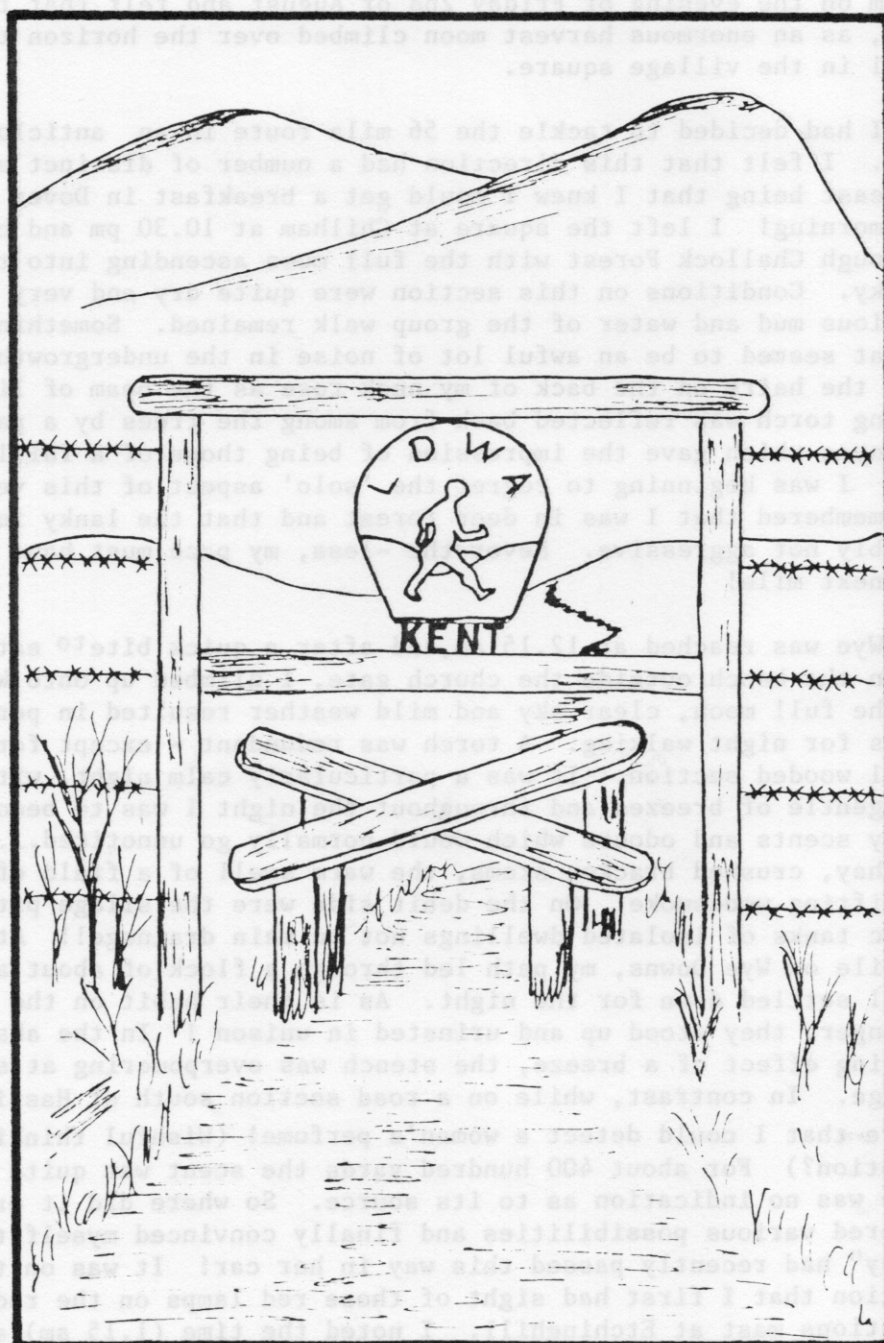


LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION

Kent Group

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

NEWSLETTER



Number 9

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The NORTH DOWNS WAY LOOP REVISITED - SOLO

Laurie Lowe

You may recall the Group walk around the NDW Loop which took place earlier this year. On that occasion sixteen members took part and a personal view of the proceedings, written by John Probert, appeared in the July issue of this newsletter.

I found many things about the route of interest and felt that here was a local LDP which might prove interesting as a solo, non-stop, unsupported challenge. Originally I planned to do it during the weekend prior to the Dales 100, but I was talked out of the idea by several group members whose judgement in such matters I respect. As it turned out, I failed to complete the 100, so my determination to tackle the Loop was even stronger. Various clashes of dates and interests prevented me from having a free weekend until early August. Thus it was that I drove down to Chilham on the evening of Friday 2nd of August and felt that the omens were good, as an enormous harvest moon climbed over the horizon to greet my arrival in the village square.

I had decided to tackle the 56 mile route in an anticlockwise direction. I felt that this direction had a number of distinct advantages, not the least being that I knew I could get a breakfast in Dover early the next morning! I left the square at Chilham at 10.30 pm and headed south through Challock Forest with the full moon ascending into the clear eastern sky. Conditions on this section were quite dry and very little of the atrocious mud and water of the group walk remained. Something was making what seemed to be an awful lot of noise in the undergrowth to my right and the hairs on the back of my neck rose as the beam of light from my wavering torch was reflected back from among the trees by a pair of gleaming eyes which gave the impression of being those of a fairly tall creature! I was beginning to regret the 'solo' aspect of this venture when I remembered that I was in deer forest and that the lanky individual was probably not aggressive. Never-the-less, my pace must have peaked over the next mile!

Wye was reached at 12.15 am, and after a quick bite to eat and a drink on the bench outside the church gate, I climbed up onto Wye Downs. The full moon, clear sky and mild weather resulted in perfect conditions for night walking. A torch was redundant - except for the occasional wooded section. It was a particularly calm night, with only the most gentle of breezes and throughout the night I was to become aware of so many scents and odours which would normally go unnoticed..... New mown hay, crushed bracken stems, the warm smell of a field of ripe wheat, drifting woodsmoke. On the debit side were the silage pits, and the septic tanks of isolated dwellings not on main drainage!! At one point, while on Wye Downs, my path led through a flock of about a hundred sheep, all settled down for the night. As is their habit on the approach of a stranger, they stood up and urinated in unison! In the absence of the diluting effect of a breeze, the stench was overpowering at such close range. In contrast, while on a road section south of Hastingleigh, I was sure that I could detect a woman's perfume! (Wishful thinking or hallucination?) For about 400 hundred yards the scent was quite strong but there was no indication as to its source. So where did it originate? I considered various possibilities and finally convinced myself that the "Avon Lady" had recently passed this way in her car! It was on this same road section that I first had sight of those red lamps on the radio - communications mast at Etchinghill. I noted the time (1.15 am) and the glowing lamps were visible from time to time until I eventually passed by

the radio station at 4 am.

At the foot of Cobb's Hill, near Stowting, I found a cattle trough with fresh running water, so I stopped to refresh myself by splashing my face with the cool water. Out of the corner of my eye I saw what I took to be a large grey cat sitting in the moonlight observing me with curiosity. I passed the time of night with it and set off on the hard climb to the hilltop. The path followed alongside a wire fence and I realised that the creature was keeping station with me on the other side of the fence. It seemed rather large for a cat and I then realised from its markings that it was in fact a young badger! Its curiosity in me was evident. When I stopped to look at it, it also halted and gazed through the fence at me. We climbed the hill side by side and at the top the animal turned away from the fence and headed off into the centre of the field to continue its mission for the night. I found this encounter very pleasing, especially as the only badgers I had previously come across had all been roadside corpses.

By now I was feeling a bit drowsy and so I lay on my back in the middle of a field of ripe wheat and enjoyed a 15 minute snooze before tackling the tricky section down to Staple Farm. The sky now started to lighten as I negotiated the tedious wooded stretch down to Coombe Farm, and yet again I failed to find the correct route from the head of the dry valley to the east of Coombe Farm. However, with the increasing light and a more obvious path my progress was good along the edge of the Downs to Folkestone. I arrived at Ceasar's Camp at 5.45 am, just as the sun emerged from a low line of cloud on the eastern horizon and the full moon was still visible high in the darker western sky. I considered losing height and calling in on Pat and Graham for breakfast but decided against giving them an early morning call. So I pushed on along the now familiar cliff top route to reach Dover at about 8.30.

Breakfast was taken at the cafe visited on the group walk. They seemed to bear no grudge, for they could hardly have forgotten our previous visit when people were washing mud out of their socks in the hand basin and sitting with feet on tables while first aid was rendered to blisters. My breakfast consisted of two large bowls of cornflakes with milk and sugar, washed down with three cups of coffee.

While seated in the cafe, I had watched the weather gradually changing and when I set out again the sky was overcast and a strong fresh breeze had sprung up. The line of the Roman Road was followed north to Ashley and then the route headed westward through Waldershare Park (worst waymarking of the whole route!) Shepherdswell to Woolage village. Lack of fluids was becoming a problem and I was shattered to arrive at the village Post Office stores expecting to be able to purchase a few cans of shandy, only to find it was closed for lunch! Up to this point everything had been perfect. Euphoria had ruled! But from here it became a less pleasant struggle. I was thirsty, my heels were developing blisters and I only now realised that I had forgotten to tape the bottoms of my feet as is my custom for distances greater than 30 miles. In addition, the route now left a lot to be desired. From Woolage to Canterbury was field after field of ripening wheat with only the narrowest of trails through the waist-high crops. For added interest much of this section follows close to a noisy motorway. To cap it all, as I arrived at Canterbury (4.30 pm) it started to rain! The final 5 or 6 miles to Chilham were cold, wet, windy, boring and increasingly slow due to sore feet. I eventually reached the village square and a welcome change of clothes at 6.30 pm.

This had been a walk of many contrasts but the boredom and discomfort

of the final miles were nothing when balanced against the pure experience of travelling alone through such a magnificent moonlit night.

I must try it again next year, possibly in the opposite direction so as to get the boring bits out of the way early on.

These two newspaper cuttings and the letter below are from John Probert
(524)

Path back in use

PIONEERING Tatsfield folk armed with wire cutters this week re-claimed an historic public footpath for the use of villagers.

A section of the 100-year-old path from Ship Hill to Chruch Hill was recently blocked off. The foot route was diverted

Villagers protested to Surrey's highways department and were given official backing

On Monday night, eight residents re-opened the footpath by cutting the wire across the walkway.

Too many dogs on this path

Sir,

On Sunday, August 4, I walked along a Tatsfield footpath and was quite astonished by the amount of excrement left by the 'pioneering Tatsfield folk's' dogs.

Perhaps these pioneers would turn out in force with shovels and take the footpath clean and safe for people that are really interested in walking.

There was a small note on the cut wire and it appears Surrey County Council was approached before the fence was erected.

The 100 year old footpath route is very vague according to Surrey County Council and permission was given for the fence to be erected.

The Ramblers Association has offered to

waysign the redirected path that so far only three people have objected to.

As a long distance ramblor I am able to see the Tatsfield residents point of view but a footpath is not just some place for walking the dog.

Mud underfoot I can tolerate, but not the filth that is liberally deposited on our footpaths.

Those of you that are interested in keeping our footpaths open would do well to walk the redirected path as often as possible and just see how little difference the redirection makes, but leave the dog at home in the garden.

J. Probert

Oxted

Open Letter

At first glance I applauded this action and no doubt so will you, but it appears that the Surrey County Council was approached before the fence was put up and the Council comment was that the direction of the path was very vague. The Ramblers Association have offered to waymark the redirected path, so what better recommendation can one have ?

I have used this path since the redirection and it makes very little difference to a good walker. I urge all members to walk this route and get the redirection established.

John Probert.

The Chairman and Secretary are at present getting quotations for a group T-shirt which it is hoped will be available next spring.

The planning of the third Wealden Waters Walk was successful judging by the results of the event weekend. (full report next issue)

Preparations for the 1986 Sevenoaks Circular are underway, providing a new route.

The National AGM will be at The Plantation Hotel, Chester on the 8th March 1986.

Our own AGM will be at St. Edith Hall, Kemsing on January 24th., and it is hoped you will be able to attend.

Finally may I remind members that their group subscriptions will be renewable from Jan 1st. It is still only £1, payable to the secretary.

Brian Buttifant, Sec.

BRIEF NOTES ON A TRIP TO GOLDEN CAP, DORSET, SOMETIME IN AUGUST 1985

Keith and Linda Warman.

(Part 1 of an occasional series of offbeat excursions)

Whilst on our honeymoon, we consulted the Dorset Coastal Path guide to find a reasonable excursion which we both could tackle. Dr Ivan Verrell's excellent little publication "Comebacks to Long Distance Walking" recommends a short walk of no more than two miles for starters, so the hitherto unconquered ascent of the eastern flank of Golden Cap was decided upon. Anyhow, a majority of two to none preferred this course of action to pushing a trolley around Sainsbury's.

From our overnight lodgings at Chideock, between Bridport and Lyme Regis, we made our intrepid way to our coastal basecamp at Seatown, a pleasant little watering-hole centred around "The Anchor Inn". Two 65 lb. rucksacks were prepared containing provisions and emergency reserves in keeping with an expedition of such magnitude. We studied the weather forecasts closely and took advice from the coastguard reports before deciding to start the summit push before the autumn rains came. From base-camp, field glasses were trained upon the summit, still one mile distant, glowing in the morning sun and living up to its romantic name. A final kit-check (actually making sure Linda's plimsoll laces were double-tied) and we were ready to leave the fleshpots of civilisation and stride boldly upwards.

We traversed the shingle beach, skirted the upturned rowing boats and entered the open grassy hillside along a distinctive path meandering upwards between isolated copses.

The morning sun grew higher and hotter but our years of experience in the sub-tropical climes of Southern England taught us to protect our bodies from the powerful rays. Therefore, out came the knotted hankies. After nearly an hour's toil and sweat, including a five minute pit-stop in a gorse clump for "essential repairs" we ascended a series of hairpin steps to reach the summit plateau.

The air was still and quiet. Views were clear. Birds were happily singing. Grasshoppers were happily doing other things, and, by all accounts enjoying it too! Our legs were heavy as we stumbled through the purple heather towards the triangulation pillar. We couldn't believe it, we had done it; from sea-level to 617 feet and the summit of Golden Cap, without the aid of an anaesthetic!!

Happy scenes were dutifully recorded on film for posterity and we dithered towards an open patch to partake in our refreshments. The views to both east (Seatown, West Bay, Chesil Beach and Portland) and west (Charmouth and Lyme Regis) were breathtaking. It was idyllic. Above us a hawk hovered motionless eyeing up its lunch, suddenly swooping out of sight onto the slopes below us. Our decision to pack high altitude anoraks and survival bags seemed a little absurd as we layed down in the warm sun. Other parties were soon joining us on the summit and we decided to set back for basecamp, which was hot about forty minutes later. The timing of our expedition was excellent as we were able to assuage our not inconsiderable thirsts by courtesy of the public bar of "The Anchor Inn", just 50 yards from basecamp (via the North Col Car Park Traverse...details in a future article)

An outing to be recommended !

A GROUP WALK ON THE WEALDWAY - 7/8 August. Brian Buttifant

The weekend for this 80 mile challenge was brought forward for various reasons, so it was hoped the superb weather we experienced fully justified the move.

This walk had been an ambition of our leader Pete Barnett, for quite some time and now it was coming to fruition, all who took part would agree I'm sure that it was well organised and highly successful. Our support was superb, of which more will be said later.

Saturday 7.30 am - Peter R, John Probert and I were picked up by a Merc. and we sped down to Eastbourne, with our chairman and Laurie, for a 9 am start. Celia arrived minutes later with Ernie to make the sixth walker. So we were ready for the off on our long trek, it was a fine morning and the forecast was good.

The waymarking was good and the official guide directions were very clear, which all helped our progress. Celia had arranged to meet us at various places during the day to ply us with welcome refreshments. As we bombed along through the Sussex countryside, we were obviously recognised by a larger walking group as we passed at speed "Are you the Kent Group?" It was planned that we would arrive at Fairwarp around 7.30 pm., so an evening meal was arranged at 'The Forresters' in advance by Celia. After a good meal, we said goodbye to Celia and set off into the night. The previous night had been down to 3 degrees, but this night was much improved and although the moon wasn't out yet, it was reasonably clear and bright. So progress was good, so much so that we found ourselves two hours up on schedule. So in order not to miss our 4 am rendezvous with Ivan Waghorn at Speldhurst, we looked for a suitable place to rest for a while. We eventually found a superb straw-filled barn, where we got some sleep and had a coffee break. After this we set off to meet Ivan on time for more coffee and cake, a welcome refreshment stop.

Near Modest Corner, we met Ian Waddell coming from the opposite direction. He had previously arranged to meet up with us, having set off from his Otford home last night. He had run/walked eastward along the NDW to its intersection with the Wealdway above Trottiscliffe and then turned south to meet up with us. He then walked back with us to that same intersection and so back home.

At 7 am we arrived in Tonbridge on schedule to meet Pauline Barnett and Dave Cowley for the prearranged breakfast stop. Oh what a delight - cornflakes and bacon butties!! At this point Simon Rickards, full of vigour, joined us for the last 26 miles. Some of us took the opportunity of this stop to change socks, torn shorts, etc.

Now we had the four and half mile walk along the banks of the River Medway, half of which was pegged out for a fishing match. Fishermen were just arriving with all their tackle, and we got some surprised comments when they heard we had walked from Eastbourne. Pauline and Dave met us again at Goose Green as we walked north through the hop gardens and orchards. Pauline met us four more times as we travelled towards Gravesend. The weather was still warm so these refreshment stops were indeed welcome. Our climb up onto the North Downs was swift and soon we were walking through the well known 'Bowling Alley' which had been under threat when the MOD bought approx 700 acres for military training. Fortunately it was reprieved by a public enquiry when the local action group won the day. As I walked on the escarpment above this area, it really did look a superb and typically English scene, the harvest had just been cut and beyond the village of Luddesdown, nestled around the village church, and cricket fan that I am, the local team were playing in a nearby field. I was pleased this area is to be preserved for others to admire.

As we neared the end of the walk, wives and dogs came out to meet us. Soon the group photograph was taken and our leader presented us with a certificate each to commemorate our 31½ hour completion of the 80 mile Wealdway.

Our thanks to Pete Barnett for a superbly organised weekend and a very sincere thanks to our greatly appreciated support team of Celia, Pauline, Dave and Ivan.

* _____ *

And now for another view of the same walk.....

THE WEALDWAY ??????????

Peter Rickards

I'm still not certain whether he said "You are doing..." or "Are you doing the Wealdway Walk?" However, the timing of the statement of question was diabolical, with three pints of cider supped in an effort to rehydrate after the Dorset Duddle, my brain was slightly fuddled and like a fool I mistook the enquiry to be referring to the Wealden Waters Walk!! Even more foolishly, I replied in the affirmative, and was then committed. I'm sure a similar ploy was used on others of the party, and whom, you may ask, could be guilty of such a dastardly trick? None other than Peter (Dr Death) Barnett.

Days later, when the realisation that I was part of the Doctor's latest brainstorm had sunk in, I started to get cold feet and sought excuses to back out of the mad scheme. How could six men walk the Wealdway from Eastbourne to Gravesend as a group and still keep their sanity? Having scraped the bottom of the barrel of the Kent group, the mad Doctor came up with five simple souls to accompany him -namely Brian B, John P,

Laurie L, Ernie B and myself. Personally, I thought he had bitten off a bit more than we could all chew, but what a masterstroke of forward planning, a direct line upstairs and we had superb weather, he put his O.S. maps through the wringer and found the flattest 80 miles in the country.

We were however collectively suspicious that the mad Doctor intended to use us to further his experiments into human endurance by making us travel the whole way sustained on 'Electrolyte' drink and liquid 'Plus Food'. But, surprise, surprise, Christian Bonnington could learn a thing or two from our Doctor on feeding expeditions. He recruited the tops in mobile cuisine. Celia 'Cake Baker' Bishop supported us marvellously through Saturday and organised a superb evening meal at the Foresters' Inn, Fairwarp. Ivan Waghorn met us at Speldhurst in the early hours with drinks and cake.

Sunday morning saw strange happenings in the covered car park off Tonbridge High Street. Dave Cowley with tables and chairs laid out had flighted his bees to that area to provide honey butties and rice pud for breakfast. It's said that behind every good man there's a better woman. Well, the Doctor's better half excelled herself whilst supporting her spouse and his conscripts, possibly her finest hour was at Tonbridge where, with her flying frypan she dispensed sausage and bacon baps.

The formal report of the walk has been written by our secretary but, as with every walk, event or what have you, one recalls amusing incidents and highlights. Among my funny memories will remain the following:-

Encountering two Arab gents barbecuing sheep's eyeballs on the front lawn of their mini-mansion.

Brian B. inadvertently miming a telephone conversation to his bank manager.

Watching Ernie convulsing with laughter whilst trying to eat rice pudding.

After our sleep in the barn, hearing the Doctor and John P. saying they hadn't slept, in spite of their snoring duet.

Then in retrospect, puzzling which end of the Doctor's anatomy made those loud snoring noises !!

6 am., seeing and empathising with Laurie retching in the middle of a field surrounded by a herd of inquisitive cows.

Jostling with hundreds of competing anglers as we walked along the banks of the Medway.

Finally, the fiasco of after having had 30 hours of peace and tranquillity, to end our epic journey yards from the busy A2 road and having to shout our congratulations to each other.

But seriously, well done Peter, it was a brilliant idea, but I'm still not sure whether you said "You are" or "Are you?".....

COVER DESIGN

My thanks to John Probert for the design on the cover of this issue. Ideally I would like to have a different design for each issue, but perhaps more realistically I would be content with a new one for each year (3 issues) So I am keen to receive any drawings (not necessarily originals) relevant to our interests and suitable for reproduction by a photocopying process. Size is not important as I can reduce or enlarge a picture to fit the cover format.

Laurie L.

The DORSET DODDLE - 18th August.

John Probert. (524)

Dave Cowley, Brian Buttifant and myself set out for Swanage at 11 am on Friday the 16th and had a leisurely drive down in Dave's brand new car, with lunch on the way. We arrived at about 4.15 pm to meet up with Pete and Pauline Barnett. The two poorer members went for the cheaper B&B, with Dave going for the luxury rooms with shower further up the hill. One or two jugs were had in the bar at Dave's Hotel, with our Dave putting in an appearance. He was apparently on first name terms with a young lady at the hotel. His excuse was that he had dinner out and then had an early night - sly old dog!

Saturday turned out bright and sunny and we left the hotel by 9.45 heading for the seafront with a good hard climb to the top of Ballard Down. There was time to look round and pick out different places of interest in the town and we were able to see the Isle of Wight quite clearly. We dropped down to sea level, heading for Studland Bay. We were given a rare treat by our good chairman - a guided tour of the National Trust nature trail. Pete's diction was liberally interspersed with the usual hilarity keeping us all in fits of laughter. We came away with a far greater knowledge of trees and fauna than when we set out, leaving us all with a hearty thirst that was soon quenched back at the pub by a pint and a fresh crab salad. A leisurely stroll back to Swanage and our thoughts turned to the following morning with plans for breakfast in our rooms, as you don't get breakfast at 6 am on a Sunday morning at a B&B hotel.

Sunday saw everyone bright and early at the coach for Weymouth. Arriving in plenty of time with a fine rain in the air, we made the usual dash along the seafront at the start. Our new Kent member, Mike Wells and I walked the first 10 miles in 2½ hours. Mike had left home at 2 am and driven down to Weymouth that morning. He had heard the night before that he could take someone else's place. Mike's one step to my two left me behind on the hills but with a little effort, I was able to catch up on the flat. After about 13 miles Mike got lost with lots of other walkers and disappeared across the army rifle range. But my natural instinct told me to turn right down the hill and follow the route description even if it did put me behind by 25 minutes. About this time, I had cramp in both legs which lasted well over an hour. I managed to keep going but the ups and downs were quite tough with lots of walkers talking about giving up at the next checkpoint. Round about Tyneham to St Alban's Head the going is quite a bit easier and I found that I was passing people again after drinking a concoction that Peter Rickards had given to me. On then to a good finish in 8 hours and 17 minutes. Mike Wells did a good time of 7-38, well done Mike on your first challenge walk. I hope you did not drive home again after the walk!

After a bath and a rest back at the hotel, seven of us took the Italian Restaurant by storm with lots of ribald comments and hilarity. We managed to get through a marvellous Italian dinner without getting thrown out. Every table in the place was full and there was not one person who was not laughing. We were told by the staff the next day that it was the best evening that they had had for years! We will go again next year.

Monday morning saw us all out in the bay for an hour of mackerel fishing, just to finish off what we all agreed was a most enjoyable weekend. Why not make a date for next year - see you in Swanage!!

The GUILDFORD BOUNDARY WALK - 15th September.

Keith Warman.

A couple of hundred walkers and a cluster of runners set out on this established event in warm autumnal sunshine. The starting time was put back to 10 am. this year which meant less of an effort to meet the 9 am. "Off" and made sense considering the distance this year was just twenty one miles.

The field was soon strung out, apart from the obvious bunching at the first stile, and must have confused the horse-trialists met after a couple of miles. I found myself in conversation with Tony 'I'll take one stride to your three' Twyman. The Surrey group checkpoints were well spaced and welcomed over a familiar route, one which had a major change over previous years.

The way through Shalford was altered to follow the recent re-routing of the North Downs Way, chopping 1½ miles from last year's distance. This variation heads directly west through Shalford to meet the River Wey opposite the "sandy bank" and "fairy bridge" where the route turns away from the river. The waterway traverse is now achieved by a newly constructed bridge, which I considered a rather hideous sight on this pleasant backwater.

Amongst strident Kent members met during the day were John Probert, Harry Bishop, Ivan and Susan Verrell and Ernie and Celia Bishop. The fine weather held out until the end, for me a nice comeback after a long lay-off.

A MOONLIGHT TREK

Harry Bishop.

I didn't do the Cleveland Classic. I opted for a night walk with Thames Valley Group over the Lambourne Downs and what a splendid walk it was!

You can't see a lot at night they said, but Friday night last, you could see for miles. A beautiful big moon, a silver landscape and all earthly things etched sharp and clear upon night's background.

Don, John, Bob, Harold, Derek, three runners training for the Long Mynd, me and one other chomped forth from the hell-hole of the Lambourne pubs and fish and chip shops and wended our way on a circuitous route following an old Berkshire "25" (according to Harold)

Up the road onto high ground, lost our line a little, over the barbed wire, found the track again, a pair of frisky horses scampering around, up another hillock and onto a track leading to Uffington Castle mound and moat. The Membury radio mast had been our beacon for a long time. Coffee break and in the midnight car park below the couples courted or walked a path beneath our high gaze.

Onto the Ridgeway and down through some pretty picturesque thatched villages whose dormant dwellers neither twitched nor stirred until at some huge farm, the dogs awoke and created a fine old shindig.

A climb and climb again to Rats Hilltop and what a pull that was but cheery Harold bade us wait and sup, our second respite of the night.

It was warm, I was glad of my old drinking water bottle and as we thrashed along I mused on our activity. What delight and joy and relief from care or trouble in just footling about the countryside on a night like this!

All too soon we saw the lights of Lambourne and silently strode into town to meet the mist and fog of pre-dawn, and say we'll meet again some other day (or night)

THE CLEVELAND CLASSIC - 28th September

Trevor Blake

or..... Didn't we have a lovely time,
The day we went to Ayton.
There was Brian and me and Laurie made three
All part of the happy Kent family.
With Jack, Ivan and John to help us along
The going was very easy.
Ron's navigation's a treat for poor old Richard's feet,
And we all went round.

Eight members of the Kent group decided to give it a go, and duly arrived at Great Ayton village hall to await the start of this testing 56 mile challenge walk. We were fortunate that Laurie and Jack had walked it in previous years and this coupled with Ron's excellent knowledge of the area and navigational skills made life very easy for the rest of us in the group.

The walk started at 11 am. in glorious weather and soon we were panting for breath going up Roseberry Topping, a 1051 foot hill which was exceedingly steep. At the top was the first of many checkpoints and after a quick look down on the surrounding countryside, we were on our way towards the checkpoint at Slapwath.

After Slapwath it was quickly on toward the sea at Saltburn. The weather was still holding - they/sun ^{say the} shines on the righteous - I guess it must be true! From Saltburn we followed the well-used coastal section of the Cleveland Way, passing the checkpoints at Skinningrove north and south, to arrive eventually at Staithes. Here we stopped for a few minutes for refreshments and I managed to convince the little toe on my right foot that it wasn't bruised. Luckily it got the message and dared not to disagree again.

Then onward, ever onward to Scaling Dam via the checkpoint at Roxby Woods. We arrived at the dam with plenty of light left in the sky and this enabled us to reach the Danby Beacon Check with the minimum use of torches. Here we were greeted and entertained by "The Clowns" who looked after us very well. However, I think singing lessons would not come amiss! We then proceeded via Danby Rigg to Botton village, where we again found a well-appointed checkpoint with plenty of food and drink.

A little dog, who had adopted us way back at Danby Rigg partook of a little refreshment himself and promptly followed us to Bloworth Crossing where we persuaded the marshals to look after him and phone his owner, who had the good sense to put his number on his collar. However he was a strong member of our group and can thank Laurie for lifting him out of a ditch, or he may still have been up on the moors.

Park Dyke and Gribdale CP's quickly came and went and so it was back to our friend Roseberry Topping. No, I didn't carry Brian's rucksack!

We finally arrived back at Great Ayton and found we had completed the walk in 18 hours and 28 minutes including stops. So we felt well satisfied with our efforts. And next year? Ugh! What about it little toe?

Those taking part were :- Laurie Lowe, Brian Buttifant, Ivan Verrell, Trevor Blake, Richard Oddy, Jack Burgoyne, John Probert and Ron Roweth.

TWO TALES FROM A CAT LOVER

Laurie Lowe.

As some of you are aware, I am not a 'dog person'. As far as I am concerned, all dogs fall into two categories. The first are dogs which belong to strangers. These are on no account to be trusted any nearer than you can throw a sizeable piece of rock. Particularly nasty examples in this category are farm dogs who dispute rights-of-way even more vociferously than their owners and the Farm Dog, mark 2, which has been trained not to bark, but who instead creeps up silently behind you in the dark and then snaps at your ankles! It was in this situation that I made the discovery that 'adrenalin' is brown-coloured!

The second category is that of dogs belonging to friends. These I can cope with. They can be treated in the same way as babies belonging to friends or relatives, i.e. a quick pat or stroke and then they can be returned to their owner/parents' custody for safe keeping.

So with this background, it seems odd that there have been two occasions recently when I appeared to take pity on strange dogs while involved in walking activities.

The first was while marshalling the Sevenoaks Circular. That truly kind-hearted fellow, Eric Rolfe (Essex & Herts) found a stray dog while walking the event. Instead of doing the sensible thing and ignoring it, he attached himself to it by means of a spare bootlace and allowed it to tow him round for about 15 miles. When I met Eric, he was considering dropping out of the event in order to hand the dog in at Sevenoaks police station. I thought it a pity that he (Eric, that is) should not finish the full 30 miles, so I offered to put the dog in my car and return it to the walk HQ, from where its owner could collect it. Now it was quite a small dog and for most of the 15 miles it had probably been struggling along below mud-level (it being a typical 'Sevenoaks') The object at the end of the bootlace now resembled a football-sized piece of mud with the odd leg and lump of fur protruding. We placed it in the car for safe keeping until the checkpoint closed down, and I could move on. When I got into the car, the dog looked remarkably clean and I soon realised that it had managed to transfer most of its muddy exterior to the interior of the car. It took ages to clean the mud from the seats and roof-lining and in fact when I sold it a year later, there was still the odd muddy footprint to be discovered in out of the way places.

The more recent incident involving a dog was during the Cleveland Classic and indeed Trevor made a passing reference to it in his report. I had intended to write a report on the event but Trevor beat me to it! Anyway apart from my dog incident, the only other thing of note was that Jack Burgoyne has at last found the correct route off of Danby Rigg!! However, back to the dog. In fact it started soon after we left Danby Rigg CP. We found that a small dog was walking with us in the dark. We wrongly assumed it belonged to two walkers several hundred yards behind, but they disclaimed ownership. We handed it in at Botton Village CP and thought that was the end of it. It was not to be! The little chap so liked our company that he broke free and caught us up again some mile or so

out of the village. So he stayed with us up over Rosedale Head, along the road section and onto the Lyke Wake part of the route. This section got very muddy and we spread out in the dark trying to find a better path. This involved walking through quite tall heather and I found myself alone with the dog. I was much amused to see that he was having to leap over the heather in order to make progress. While I was watching his erratic progress in my torch beam, he suddenly disappeared into a deep drainage gully and did not reappear. Commonsense told me to ignore him and push on since I was now falling well behind my companions, but in a weak moment I turned back to find out why he had not re-surfaced. Parting the heather bushes with my hands, all I could see was his snout protruding from the black peaty slime. I dragged him out by the collar and placed him on terra firma. He shook himself and stood there shivering and unwilling to move. I guess he was so frightened by the experience that he did not trust moving on in the dark. I walked on some yards and called him and generally made the sort of noises that 'doggy people' make, but to no avail. He had decided he was not going to move in such treacherous surroundings. In my second moment of weakness, I picked him up and tucked the smelly, dripping mess under my arm and then pushed on through the heather until after a mile or so I eventually reached the disused railway track which I knew led to the next CP. Once on the good surface of the old railway, I decided that the dog could do his own walking and so I put him down. Now this is where the 'man's best friend fallacy' is exposed. The ungrateful hound saw the light of torches in the distance and shot off up the track and got to the next checkpoint ahead of me! This time I made sure he was tied very firmly to a tent pole, and I believe he was eventually returned to his owner, none the worse for his night out with the lads!

P.S. I hope that 'Kim' cannot read!

FUTURE PROGRAMME

Dec 13th. Christmas Drinks Evening at The Bull, Otford. 8 pm.

Jan ~~17~~¹⁰th. John's Night Walk. Another in the series of John Skinner's popular winter walks. Meet in the car park near the Bayley bridge in Aylesford for an 11 pm start, or earlier in The Chequers just up the road!! 20 miles hopefully in wintry conditions!!

Jan 24th. Group AGM at St. Edith Hall, Kemsing. 7.30 for 8 pm.

Feb 22nd. Thames/Darent area walk. Meet at 8.30 am Greenhithe station car park for a 20 mile walk. Refreshment stop at Collyers Arms, Betsham. Leaders:- Trevor Blake and Bryan Clarke.

Feb 27th. "A Walk in the Clouds" A Pyrenean slide evening at Crockham Hill Youth Hostel. Presented by the warden Kev Reynolds. 7.30 for 8 pm. This should be an interesting evening as Kev has walked in the Pyrenees for many years and knows this area well.

Mar 16th. SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR - A new route is planned based on the pre-1981 route. Offers of help will be needed, so if you are willing, please contact Brian Buttifant on [REDACTED].