



LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION

Kent Group

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

NEWSLETTER

Pss-s-t! You'll be better off
walking with the Kent Group.



KENT LDWA COMMITTEE - 1990

CHAIRMAN.....PETER BARNETT
TREASURER....RON ROWETH
SECRETARY....DAVE SHELDRAKE

Committee Members.....TREVOR BLAKE
BRIAN BUTTIFANT
PAUL HATCHER
JOHN PROBERT
NEAL O'ROURKE
SUSAN VERRELL

Newsletter Editor:- Laurie Lowe, [REDACTED]

GROUP PROGRAMME UP TO AUGUST 1990

THU 17 MAY EVENING WALK. Meet at the "Fox" at Keston at 7 pm. Leader is Ron Roweth [REDACTED]

SAT 19 MAY WAY OUT WEST. A day-time repeat of the Winter Night Walk, extended to approx 20 miles. Starting and finishing at Dryhill Picnic Site, near Sundridge (GR 496553) 9 am. start, pub stop. Leader Ernie Bishop [REDACTED]

SUN 17 JUN MIDSUMMER MINI-MOUNTBATTEN (OR PLAGUEY CHURCHES PLOD)
Meet at 9 am. at Western Road car park, Borough Green (GR 607573) almost due south of B.R. Station. About 22 miles with pub lunch stop. Leader Tom Sinclair. [REDACTED]

THU 21 JUN SUMMER SOLSTICE STROLL. Evening walk, meeting at Shipbourne Church on A227 at 7 pm (GR 592 523) Leader David Sheldrake, [REDACTED]

SUN 15 JUN NORTH DOWNS / GREENSAND LOOP. 22 miles approx. Meet at Potters Corner on A20 (GR 991449). Start 9.30 am. Leader Paul Hatcher (023384 669). It is hoped to arrange pub stop with food. Definite stop for cream teas at Pluckley Church. Anyone wishing to take part in second half of walk (12 miles approx) phone Paul nearer the time for details.

SUN 22 JUL ANDREDSWEALD CIRCUIT - See Future Events in Strider for details. Offers of help with marshalling, etc, to Ernie Bishop [REDACTED]

THU 26 JUL EVENING WALK. Meet at The Green, Westerham (GR 447540) at 7 pm. Leader is John Probert [REDACTED]

SUN 19 AUG TUNBRIDGE WELLS CIRCULAR - See Future Events in Strider for details. This is a repeat of the '89 Centenary walk of 25 miles. Contact Mike Smith [REDACTED] with offers of help for running this new event.

SECRETARY:- David Sheldrake, [REDACTED]

FRONT COVER *-
* Suggestions for the caption to fill the bubble on the front cover are requested by the Editor - a pair of bootlaces for the best!!

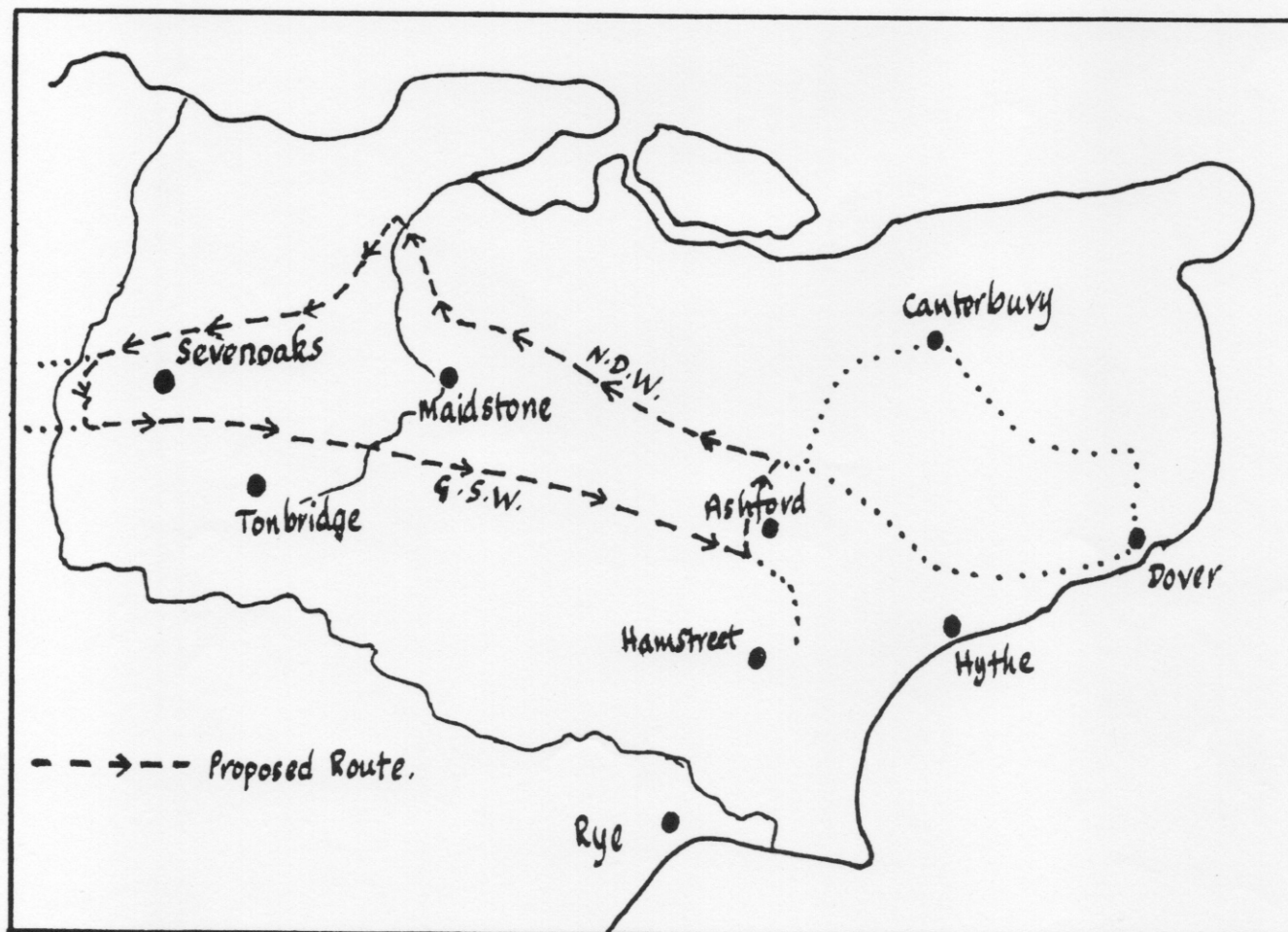
THE 1992 HUNDRED

The 1992 Hundred (held over the Whitsun weekend) will be organised by the Kent Group and the route will be entirely within the boundaries of the County. Briefly, the proposed route will follow the Greensand Way eastwards from the Sevenoaks area to reach the district around Ashford. It will then swing north to link up with the North Downs Way, and this long-established L.D.P. will be followed westward to near the Kent/Surrey border. The final miles will return the weary walkers to the Sevenoaks area.

At the present time it is hoped that a suitable venue can be found for the start and finish in the Sevenoaks area. Criteria for a suitable venue include - large halls for registration, storage of baggage, sleeping space, showers, car parking and catering facilities. Remember that in recent years the number of entrants for the event has been about 450! Suggestions for possible venues are needed - preferably in the Sevenoaks district and with easy access to the local footpath system.

A working party has been formed and Trevor Blake has agreed to act as the co-ordinator for the initial period of planning. Trevor's phone no. is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. This promises to be a substantial undertaking for the Group and the help of many willing members during the run up to the event will be essential. For a start it has been suggested that any members who live close to either the G.S.W. or the N.D.W. could look at the route in their area to try to identify any potential problems associated with the proposed route.

It is hoped that by the time the next newsletter is published, we will have a work plan established for the many tasks which will need to be completed in time for Whitsun 1992 !



KENT WALKING - The letter in the December issue from Martyn Berry, commenting on the Bruce Kent Walk has brought two replies.

From John Probert :-

The early August sponsored walk by Bruce Kent did not impress me one little bit as I could and would walk from Warsaw to Brussels given the time and the back-up, but my interest would not be in the CND or the Warsaw pact.

My interest in the Kent Group is the friendship and the walking, the newsletter is for news and views on walking, not a vehicle for CND propaganda. There is quite a lot I could say both for and against the Trident campaign, but this is not a political paper and should not be used as such.

There are no "high-ups" in the Kent Group but we do have a committee that any member may approach to discuss a walk or a problem and the committee will do its best to sort the problem out, but no one individual will make a decision on CND or Trident (and who, for goodness sake, is Ian Botham?)

Whoever made the decision to pass up this fine opportunity for a bit of cheap publicity has my sincere admiration; rejecting this piece of nonsense in spite of their 'lack of imagination and irrational fear' - whatever that means - shows a good deal of sense.

No one, not even Bruce Kent, is able to join the Kent Group without membership of the national LDWA. Honorary members are unwanted hangers-on and should be firmly discouraged.

From Ernie Bishop :-

Although I have no wish to start an exchange of letters in the newsletter on the Group's treatment of Bruce Kent, nevertheless, I feel that some comment is required on Martyn Berry's letter in the last edition. It seems to me that Martyn's belief in and support of CND has resulted in a biased view of the whole matter.

If "honorary membership" is to be offered to anyone (and that hasn't been debated for members' views) I certainly feel that person ought to be noted for his or her walking prowess, or one who has given exceptional service to the Group. I also believe that it would be a serious mistake to be seen to be associating ourselves with any political organisation of whatever persuasion.

One of the pleasures of being a member of the LDWA is that its sole purpose is to promote long distance walking and friendships are not marred by conflicts of political views.

Whatever else is said, Bruce Kent will always be known for his CND activities not for his walking. The daily mileage on his charity walk was less than many of our members cover with a full pack on a normal walking holiday. Certainly any special recognition of Bruce Kent could only be seen as relating to his CND activities, not for his walking.

To the contrary, Dick Crawshaw was noted for his walking rather than his politics. His 255 miles non-stop walking record was a remarkable achievement and required a great deal of character, stamina and sheer strength of will.

As one who has covered 100 miles, I have some faint inkling of just what was required to achieve the distance that he did.

With all due respect to our late President, his political activities were not so well known. The fact that he was originally a Labour politician and not the Conservative that Martyn Berry labelled him, merely emphasises that fact!

A WEE WEALDEN WATERS WALK.....

Tom Sinclair

I am sure that was not what Laurie planned when he offered to lead a group walk on the Tunbridge Wells Circular route but the title seems appropriate!

We met at the Town Hall on Sunday 11th February and those who had heard a recent weather forecast were doubtful about the wisdom of setting off at all. However, soon after 8.30 we were walking south towards Hawkenbury along pavements and metalled by-roads and tracks. The sun was shining, the clouds were high in the sky, we were a happy band - including the one who called out after about two miles "too much tarmac!"

The next complaint, as we approached Pembury Old Church and passed the gate of Kent College for Girls was "there are never any gym-slips around when I pass here". The weather was still good and we had covered 5 miles in 80 minutes, but.....

As we drew near to the region of Tudely
The heavens did open and rain on us rudely.

Wind and rain had abated by 11.30 when we paused by some convenient logs in Somerhill Park for light sustenance. Soon afterwards the right of way ran between two high stone banks (possibly built by the landowner so that his view of the park would not be obstructed by passing yokels) and past a large pink mansion.....

Across the fields and under the railway
(Soon we'll be joining a part of the Wealdway)
Through a copse to a bridge o'er a stream
(Someone should tell "them" it's short of a beam)

Cloudy skies now but some of us had taken off our waterproofs and were not (yet) being punished for our optimism. The "Vauxhall" on the A21 and several other pubs around Southborough (where one clairvoyant went home to lunch) reminded us that the lunch stop was not too far away. At ten to one we reached the "Northfield House" pub in Speldhurst to find Mike Smith already there. An hour later we emerged in good spirits to be greeted by a breeze and a drizzle which were both to intensify steadily over the next four hours. There is no place in this poetic journal for the libellous suggestion that the human and meteorological arrivals were in any way connected !

Westwards for about a mile then south to pass close to Langton Green, where no one succumbed to the offer of an alternative short roadwalk to Tunbridge Wells. On south over parkland and farmland to Groombridge whose centre we by-passed before making roughly S.W. to go near Harrison Rocks. General westerly direction from here to Frant, crossing the A26 at Eridge Green, (Blinding rain affects the memory too !) with a welcome tea-break in the dry outbuilding of a kind farmer. Footpaths had become streams, daylight and energies were fading fast and we were glad of another pause under the lychgate of Frant church where, I am told, are inscribed these lines.....

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stop and stare.

We did not pause to gaze and stare
Through wood and golf course we did hare
Dreaming of baths, fires, food and beer
(Good brother, I pray you, be thou of good cheer)
We were buffeted, wet and in much need of rest
Thank you, Laurie, your walk was one of the best.

WATERLOGGED WOE.....

Harry Bishop

I'm absolutely soaking, sopping, dropping, dripping wet,
The H₂O has slithered in 'twixt head and toe and neck,
The puddles lie around my feet
Now I've doffed the old cagoule,
Oh, why didn't I listen to Fish and say "No"
To rambling in rain and strong gales with L. Lowe.

Two dozen souls surrounded him on a bright, cold Sunday morn,
I'll lead you round yer Tunbridge Wells, he said, that'll keep you warm,
So off we went at a fastish lick,
With a prod from a bee-keeper's walking stick,
Someone put rocks in the Chairman's sack
Or we'll be home for lunch at the pace he cracks.

The first raindrops bounced 'ere we hit the pub,
Nothing serious at first but then here's the rub
For standing outside this warm country inn
Was a foul weather man, to speak his name is a sin,
Remember it well, for the day that he brought us,
The originator, my friends, of the grim Wealden Waters.

The afternoon was not quite fine, marred by wind and heavy rain,
By wind and heavy rain, more rain and yet more rain,
Suspiciously I eyed this man,
And thought of football and a transfer plan,
The Group could sell him to a sheikh in Sudan
Where water-starved oases in that famished land
Would soon fill up quickly like a seaside in sand.

Then darkness fell, the wind dropped and we finished our toilsome trail
Said goodbye to the fiend who'd blithely led us through many a gummy dell.
Got back to the car and to my disgust
Having left in the clear dawn with a minimum of fuss,
I had no spare trousers or similar apparel,
So I drove home sans breeches in a wrap-around towel.

Footnote:- These two accounts of an exceedingly wet and windy afternoon have kindly omitted to mention an incident for which I (the leader) am to blame. The conditions that afternoon were as bad as one is likely to experience in the S.E. of England. In spite of my intention to ensure that the group remained together, a party of five did become detached from the back of the main group and they subsequently missed a not very obvious turn-off. One of the small group was beginning to feel the cold and in addition was suffering from a leg strain. Wisely, four of the party decide to return to Tunbridge Wells by road, while the fifth person regained the correct route, caught up with the main party and conveyed this information to them.

However, the group on the road were not yet out of trouble. The young lady began to show signs of suffering from hypothermia and it was decided to seek shelter for her in a roadside cottage, while Dave Sheldrake carried on to T. Wells, picked up his car and then returned for the rest of the party. Fortunately the young lady soon recovered once she was placed in the warmth of the car.

"DID YOU KNOW ?".....by 'Baroni'

I intend to start a "Did You Know ?" series and bring to you hard suffering Kent Group a paragraph or two of quite useless information about things and events which will help to keep our sparse newsletter going. So here goes with No. 1.

Did you know that George Finch, born in Australia in 1888, came to England in 1902 and trained as a physical chemist ? He lived in Zurich for a number of years, climbed with the leading climbers of the day and made the first double-quilted sleeping bag from balloon fabric.

He also employed the same combination with balloon fabric and down to make the first duvet coat, trousers, hat and gauntlets. These articles were made up by S.W. Silver & Co for the 1922 Everest Expedition. Mr Finch was also the first person to use an anorak to replace the heavy jacket that was worn by walkers and climbers of that time.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS CENTENARY WALK - Mike Smith has a number of T.W.C. badges available (free of charge !) to all persons who helped on the day of the event last August. Thus someone has at last acknowledged that it's harder helping than it is doing the walk !

Mike's address is [REDACTED]x.

PULL THE OTHER ONE !!! - Jim Oddy wants to know if anyone has information about a supplier of [REDACTED]...Duck-Down Waterproof Socks. If you do know anything about the availability of these specialist items, please ring him on [REDACTED] (Don't ring me !)

ALONG WITH THE HORNED HELMETS - Part 2.

Keith Warman.

At Lower Halstow, I took a long drink of the bottle and an equally long eat of the sandwich, together with a few plums and blackberries 'borrowed' along the way. Behind Funton brickworks, Alan Sillitoe had warned of a couple of fields with a bull, and again, six years on, he was right. I started to cross the second field, noticing the group of Jerseys at the far side, when from their midst the bull appeared. No chances were to be taken and I shot off to the right and along the next field. Back on the correct path, the next field contained as many rabbits as sheep; my basic route description was too old for the diversions hereabouts, which take the path about a mile inland and 50 ft above sea level, thus affording excellent views of the Medway lower reaches and Sheppey. Glancing back, Kingsnorth Power Station was still in full sight.

At the road, a quick check on the hour told me I should be safe for the 8-20 train from the bridge, so I swept down to the sea wall via a stile with an adjacent doggy hatch - quite clever really.

Until now no other walker had been met, but beyond this stile two backpackers were quietly establishing camp below the wall. Past the lovely sounding Bedlams Bottom, rotting wooden hulls abounded. A photographer's dream with the setting sun dropping behind them. Looking ahead at Chetney inlet I saw the 7.20 train crossing the bridge, appearing like a toy train, being over three miles away. The Swale was met at the old counter wall and across at Sheerness the bright outline of an Olau Line ferry was seen at its berth.

As a lone water skier was taking advantage of the last light of day, the Kingsferry Bridge was raised for a yacht, even though the top of its mast appeared to be no more than 12 inches too tall to clear the deck without holding up the traffic. I bet there were some fuming motorists !

Up onto the building-less concrete platform of Swale Halt, surely the lonliest station in Kent, and on with trousers and pullover. On time, the train rumbled across the bridge and I hailed the driver to stop.

Back home to a hot bath and that was the first section done. My thoughts turned to the forthcoming stretch sometime in the future....

The next weekend saw me back at Swale Halt on a crisp, clear morning. The rabbits scarpered as I climbed onto the sea wall and past Ridham Dock. The new plasterboard factory has meant an industrial road along the line of the footpath; a quick map check soon put me on the sea wall again. Just past the gypsum mountain I disturbed a goose, which flapped furiously into the still air from the small inland lake. Looking at the map later, I discovered this to be an effluent lagoon, so perhaps I did the goose a favour.

The path passed under an old coaling stage with an overhead conveyor and I marched along a section of the discarded rubber belt wondering how many tons of material it had carried during its lifetime. This section around Sittingbourne is not noted for scenic beauty as the path skirts Kemsley mill (and the compound where several acres of waste paper went up in smoke earlier in the summer) the perimeter fence of the Corporation tip and the sewerage works.

Around the eastern side of Milton Creek the path used to keep close to the water, but this area is now becoming one huge industrial estate, thereby diverting the right of way inland around estate roads. The creek proper is rejoined near the closed "Bricklayers Arms" pub and passes Murston brickworks (still open and making Kent stocks) and the old oyster ponds. Swans and lapwings here.

And so to the disused Elmley Ferry. The tide was out, and the 'hards' were clearly visible on both sides of the Swale, together with the leaning guideposts. It was here that James II was arrested by Faversham fishermen in 1688 while trying to flee the country. I wondered if the wrecked hull could have been the old ferry. No fishermen today as the next three miles of glorious isolation along the wall took me to the head of Conyer Creek. A drink stop and the creek was followed inland to the boatyard, past the "Ship Inn" and the brickworks and through the scrubland to the sea wall again.

A sea breeze was blowing a blizzard of thistle seeds which appeared like a snowstorm at times. More sailing barges were coming from Faversham and along the Swale, but I had to watch my footsteps to avoid ruts in the cracked turf. Eventually I crossed Luddenham Cut and encircled the old dock of the derelict Uplees explosive works before reaching Harty Ferry, the second disused Swale crossing. The Ferry Inn on Sheppey opposite looked busy, as the path swept

inland alongside Oare creek.

Beside a dumped electricity pylon (ugh) a sign warned ships of the height of the cable over the creek at 25.14 metres. I ducked under and on around the head of the creek (200 metres of tarmac) past more bobbing boats up the opposite side. The Shipwrights Arms was conveniently positioned at the junction of Oare and Faversham Creeks. Compared with the bright sunshine, the pub was very dark, but not too dark for me to be able to locate the bar in the corner. The talk was of boats and the sea but I was more interested in the wall maps of the Thames from source to sea, fully five feet high. A jar of cool 'Sheps' went down the hatch and the sea wall was rejoined to pass the day's only walker, seen along Faversham Creek.

A handful of succulent blackberries were enjoyed on the outskirts of Faversham; along Front Brents and the chalkboard outside the Albion pub proclaimed (or warned of) noisy seafood. "Crabs, cockles, mussels, whelks, etc, hear every Sunday". Over the creek bridge, into the town centre where I had left the car.

Another enjoyable section, left me thinking of the next stage towards Whitstable and Herne Bay, from where the path leaves the North Kent coast, cutting across Thanet to Sandwich and the Channel.

Recommended reading;- "The Saxon Shore Way" by Alan Sillitoe and Fay Goodwin. Hutchinson, 1983. A background guide rather than a route description.

"The Saxon Shore Way" route cards by Kent Area R.A.
7 sections of the £10 have been published to date at £2.65 per set, including postage from [REDACTED];

BOOKS - Over the years I have gained pleasure from reading travel books in which the author explores a region or country, its people, places, history, etc., while travelling mainly on foot. I do not include in this category footpath guides or even the Wainwright books, excellent as they are, but rather those autobiographical accounts of travels made on foot. The list below gives details of some such books which I would recommend to others. I would like to hear from anyone who can recommend additional books of a similar nature.

"A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush" by Eric Newby. The story of a two-man expedition (1956) into this remote region of Nuristan, made all the more interesting by a complete lack of previous experience of such an undertaking.

"Travels with a Donkey" by Robert Louis Stevenson. A journey through the Cevennes of the 1870's with Modestine the donkey and only a crude sleeping bag for shelter when benighted in the hills.

"Hannibal's Footsteps" by Bernard Levin. In which he describes a journey undertaken in 1985 and which follows Hannibal's route through the French Alps.

"Marching Spain" by V.S. Pritchett. A 300 mile walk across Spain in 1927, when the country was largely isolated and many of the people he met had never seen a foreigner before. A portrait of Spain prior to the civil war.

"As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning" by Laurie Lee. The story of his trip from Vigo in the north to Castillo in the south, where he was finally caught up in the outbreak of the civil war.

"Wild Wales" by George Borrow. An account of a walking tour made in 1854 at the age of 50. Interesting description of the country in early Victorian times spoilt somewhat by the author's rather pompous attitude to the natives!

Laurie Lowe.