

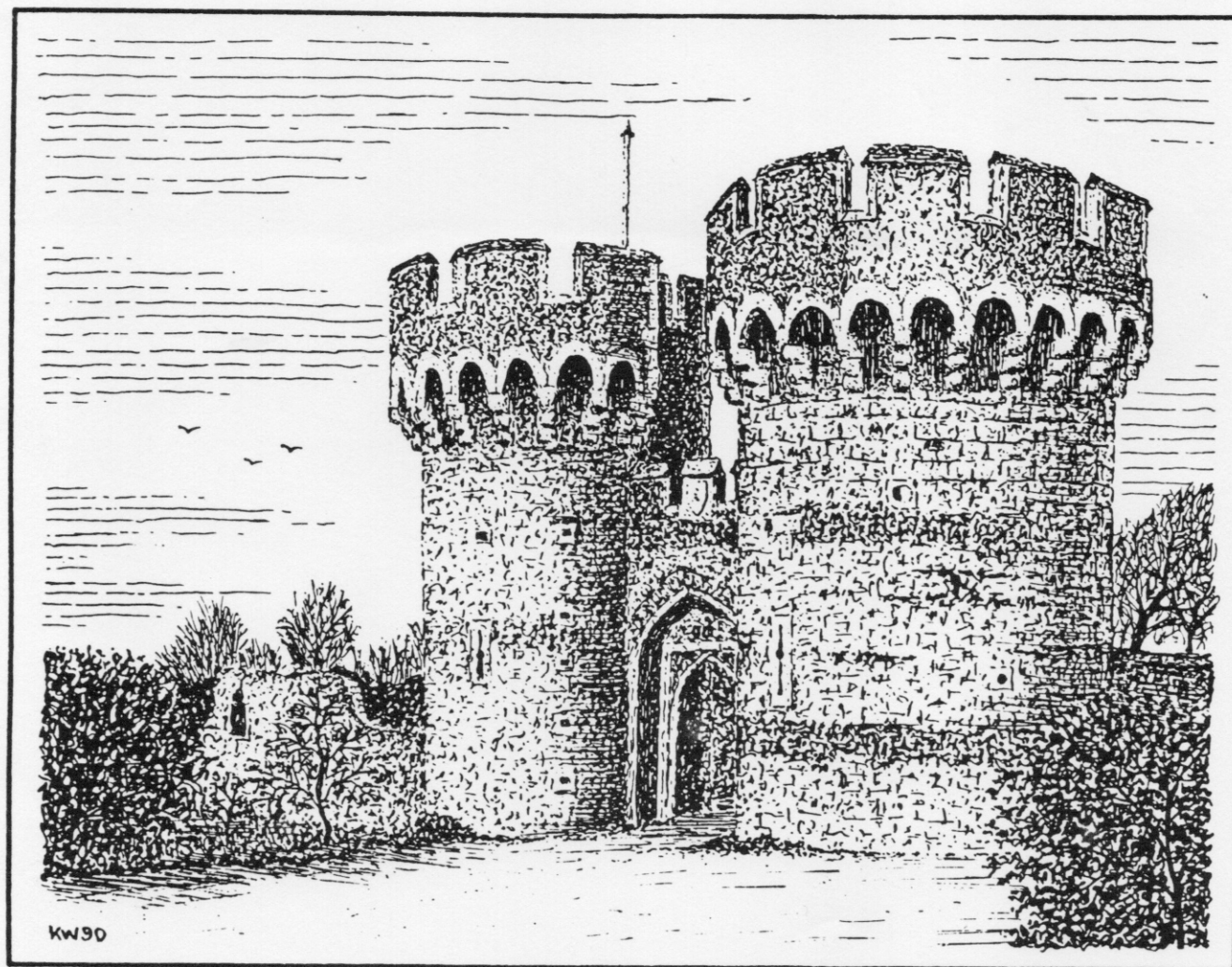


LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION

Kent Group

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

NEWSLETTER



COMMITTEE

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 FROM JANUARY 1991

- FRI JAN 11 NIGHT WALK IN THE MEDWAY AREA. Meet at "The Bush", Rochester Road, Aylesford. (GR 733 592) at 9.30 pm. for 10.30 start. Approximately 25 miles (13 miles following the NDW and 1992 Hundred route). Contact Ivan Waghorn [REDACTED] or David Sheldrake [REDACTED].
- FRI JAN 25 GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING At St. Edith's Hall, Kemsing, near Sevenoaks. 7.30 pm. for 8.
- SUN FEB 24 MINNI MARITIME MARATHON. Meet 9 am. at Folkestone West Station for a walk of 20-25 miles linking several hamlets in the Downs with names ending in "Minnis". Leader Mike Smith. [REDACTED].
- SUN MAR 3 SEVENOAKS OUTCROPS WALK. Meet 10 am. at One Tree Hill National Trust carpark GR 559 532. About 9 miles, visiting local points of interest en route. Optional climbing, caving, etc. Leader Martyn Berry [REDACTED].
- SUN MAR 17 SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR - See "Future Events" in Strider. A new route this year, taking in part of the Darenth Valley. Offers of help to Brian Buttifant [REDACTED].

If ANYONE is willing to lead a walk during the summer, would they please contact the secretary with details by 18th January at the latest.

David Sheldrake, [REDACTED]

From Tom Sinclair.....

Late 16th Century English proverb:-

"A traveller must have a falcon's eye, an ass's ears, an ape's face, a merchant's words, a camel's back, a hog's mouth and a stag's legs".

I came across this quotation in a newsletter on retirement. It seemed to have some relevance to the backpacker of today!

COVER PICTURE: This delightful drawing of Cooling Castle is one of six produced by Keith Warman to accompany his series on the Saxon Shore Way. Each sketch is of a castle on the route and they will appear on the covers of future issues in Gravesend to Rye order.

FROM KEITH WARMAN :-

I read with interest Don Scott's impressions of the Chiltern 100 and I would like to offer comments on some of the points he raised.

Ascent/Descent.....Entrants were forewarned that the total would be in excess of 14,000 feet, and as roughly 70 % of the field successfully completed the event, can it really be considered too much? I cannot recall too many vicious ups or downs but I do remember that there were many long, tiring gradients. The only ascent which I approached with some trepidation was up past the windmill at Turville, probably because it was in view for a while beforehand.

Stiles.....I agree with Don's comments and was amazed at the variety of the constructions encountered.

Reconnoitering.....I was fortunate at having the opportunity to pre-walk my two night sections but I considered it was part of my total preparation and so do not feel I had some form of advantage for so doing. Also, I was able to enjoy the dark bits in daylight!

Baggage Point.....I believe the reason this was not provided was that the first checkpoint to offer the space required was Wheeler End and, being a double stop at 75 and 93 miles, the organisers considered this to be too near to the finish to be beneficial.

Cagoules and Overtrousers.....I don't agree with Don's claim that these should not have been mandatory. Irrespective of the weather, the nights were cold, and I have in the past been thankful for my cagoule for an hour during a 3 a.m. cold snap on the Surrey Summits. Also, in the unfortunate case of a serious injury at night, the body cools down when stationary and the waterproofs could prove a life-saver.

Route Description and Checkpoints.....Both were very good, although I thought the food was a little lacking early on. At checkpoint 1 there were cold drinks and biscuits and at checkpoint 2, biscuits (they had run out of water, much to the embarrassment of the marshals) It is easy to 'knock', especially in hindsight, but the refreshments from checkpoint 3 onwards were excellent.

Staying Awake.... A simple answer Don - run, and miss the nights altogether! Seriously, it would appear to affect each of us differently but how about building in a sleep stop on your overnight walks? I chose to walk through two nights and prepared accordingly. I managed half an hour's sleep at each of the 84 and 93 mile checkpoints (with the aid of kind marshal-alarms) and this seemed to work. At the former, incidentally, there were mattresses and duvets provided on the hall floor, which must have a higher "pampering factor" than having extraneous support.

On a more serious note, I have mentioned above how easy it is to moan about organisation of complicated events such as this; one only has to read the letter from Bob Ford in the August 1990 Strider (page 68) to realise how thankless this can sometimes be. In my view, Thames Valley Group and the organising committee are to be congratulated for their dedication against adversity particularly in storm-damage clearance. I hope that the Kent Group have a smoother passage in the organising of the 1992 Hundred.

PURBECK PLOD 10TH JUNE 1990

Don Scott

We stayed the night before at Lulworth Cove Y.H., full and friendly, skipping a visit to the pub in favour of an evening walk without a map trying to find the "back" way off the cliffs to the hostel in the gathering twilight.

The side roads over to Swanage next morning were not all that straightforward and we ended up by starting 10 minutes late. The entry form referred to a start between 9.00 and 9.30 but beware!, your time on the certificate will only count from 9.00.

At least we were spared the mass start; I don't like these. Nevertheless, we gradually clawed our way into and through the field, measuring progress by the time of a friend from Wessex Group whose number I knew and who had started on time. There are plenty of passing places along the cliffs all the way to Kimmerage Bay and, for those who do not know the route, plenty of ascents/descents too. I'll spare you the details except to say the bit beyond St Aldehm's Head, through to and past Chapmans Pool gets no better. As anyone who has done this event knows there is no route description. Instead, you are furnished with what seems at the start to be an enormous photocopy map with only the checkpoints marked. In theory, I suppose this leaves you a choice of route between them, but in practice there is hardly any choice. But after the descent from the Head I was tempted to give the low level route through the landslips a miss and follow the signposted coastal path route over the top. Only the thought that someone may think I was cheating (although that way is longer) prevented me.

Anyway, Liz and I caught up with Roger Money at Kimmerage only to let him go on alone while we lapped up the welcoming tea. Three times I have done this walk and the weather has been glorious on each occasion so this is a good spot to relax, even if time flies. For me, getting over the first ridge and up to the second was a bit of a grind. But, as usual, once we turned eastward along the spine of the Purbeck Hills the ground flowed under our feet. I'd forgotten the drinks checkpoint situated in a field on the ridge - how nice it was to find it. The ice cream from the shop at Corfe Castle was a welcome boost also. But our spirits really needed no lifting. We flew up the hills, running for much of the last 4 miles, overtaking Roger in the process. The descent from Ballard Down at the end is very enjoyable. It is slightly unreal to finish along the front crowded with holidaymakers and the start/finish hall seems most quiet after this bustle a few hundred metres away.

Liz was pleased to find she had finished one and a half hours ahead of her 1988 time for the 25 mile route and celebrated by fasting that evening whilst I tucked into a meal at Swanage Y.H., wandering the streets afterwards looking for more food!

For those of you who have not had the pleasure of doing this event, do so. It is one of two contrasting halves, the first coastal one being slightly longer in reality than the ridge. But it is far enough away to warrant an overnight stop, you will probably find.

ALPINE WALKING HOLIDAYS

Ron Roweth.

Since retiring in March 1989, I have enjoyed two seasons of organising and leading walking holidays in the Alps. Quite a number of Kent Group members have been interested enough to ask about them, and some general information based on experience to date might be useful. As to their success or otherwise, I'll leave to the judgement of those who have been with me - although Harry Bishop's poems are awaited with trepidation!

The alpine walking season is quite long - say from mid-May to mid-October - but this needs qualifying a little. Firstly, the normally fine and sunny spring and autumn weather can be (and this year certainly was) interrupted by periods of rain and snow. Secondly, the mountain huts are open for a much shorter period - mainly from mid/late June to the end of September. Thirdly, the highest of the alpine hill passes often remain blocked until July.

This leads to the following possible timetable:-

Mid-May to early July - fixed-base holidays at centres where the walking can be varied in accordance with the weather conditions.

July and September - walking tours in the high mountains.

August - Stay away (a personal view). Most areas are overcrowded and the weather can be either very hot or stormy.

Late September to mid-October - fixed-base or walking tours in the lower mountain ranges, where huts remain open.

It is a matter of personal preference whether to choose a fixed-base holiday or a back-packing tour. Most long-distance walkers are able to carry their gear on their backs without discomfort and many prefer to complete a tour - whether it be a recognised walk like the Pennine Way or the Alpine Pass Route in Switzerland - or just a circuit planned by themselves. On the other hand much enjoyment can be gained from walking each day from a village, especially in the spring when the alpine flowers are out. There are many places offering a sufficient variety of valley, hill and ridge walks to suit any party; the length and standard of walks can be more easily varied.

Some LDWA members have chosen a fixed-base holiday for their first visit to the Alps. This makes good sense, because you're never quite sure whether you will enjoy a mountain holiday until you try one, and at first glance even hill passes look mighty high! It's encouraging to hear at least some of the 'first timers' talking about back-packing tours for next year!

Accommodation on walking holidays is always an interesting topic of discussion. Shirley Hume's article on 'Hutting in the Austrian Alps' (December 1989 Strider) was considered by some to be off-putting, but wasn't intended as such. Mountain huts vary greatly from one country to another, and some mountain areas are much more remote than others.

Austrian huts, even in remote areas, are more like hotels; nearly all have a choice of beds and dormitories. The extra cost for a bed is about £2 per night and I have obtained private rooms on all my tours to date. Meals are usually good, with an adequate choice of menu. Mountain walking is still the main sporting activity in Austria; there are about 1000 huts, most of them owned by the various alpine clubs, and they cater for walkers much more than for mountaineers.

Not so in Switzerland. The Swiss Alpine Club has about 150 huts; they are definitely for mountaineers, and you need to be a climber even to approach many of them! The walking routes in Switzerland are catered for by privately-

run inns, chalets and farms, and may only be open for a few weeks in summer, when the animals are taken up to the high pastures. Standards vary greatly - in skiing areas some hotels stay open for walkers in the summer, and their facilities are usually very good. The farms and chalets can be much more primitive - adequate food, but only dormitories and at best primitive washing facilities.

In France, accomodation in the mountains can be much harder to find, even in popular walking areas. Refuges belonging to the French Alpine Club or private organisations are not so thick on the ground, they generally offer good meals - as you would expect in France - but crowded dormitories and primitive washing are still found, although there seems to be quite a lot of modernisation taking place. Accomodation in mountain villages is always adequate and in popular walking areas there is usually plenty of choice. The real difference is in Switzerland, where basic prices are almost twice those in the other alpine countries. The cost of meals and accomodation is generally thought to be very moderate, however, especially when compared with costs in tourist areas in the U.K.

For those who have a choice of timing for their holidays, it can be difficult deciding which month to go to the mountains. The walking itself is always excellent, of course, but apart from that it is purely personal. The alpine flowers are quite unique, and some are only in bloom for a week or two - in June or July, depending mainly on the altitude. A mid-season tour through the high mountains can be unforgettable and may be rewarded with rare sightings of ibex or golden eagles. On the other hand, autumn is very much more than between seasons. In recent years the weather until mid-October has been settled with warm sunshine and only occasional days of snow; the colouring in the mixed-wood forests is magnificent.

I am working on a similar programme of alpine walking holidays for the 1991 season, and would be happy to provide more information on possible tours, costs, etc. for anyone interested in participating.

A SHORT WALK OR TWO.

Don Scott

Lefty Boot met his mate, Knobbly Knees, in the pub one evening soon after they had both come home from their holidays and talk turned to what each of them had done. Lefty described his fortnight in the Alps.

"Did the Tour de Mont Blanc, you know. 100 miles all the way round. You've got to be fit to do that sort of distance, Knobbly. It wouldn't be the sort of thing I would recommend you to try in your condition. I imagine you pottered round the Lake District again. Did you get any walking done this time?"

"A bit," his friend replied. "Got there on the Saturday and was there for a full 13 days but took it slowly to begin with. The first day was very bad weather so I just went down to the end of the drive of the Guest House I was staying in. And back again, of course," he added. "A full 100 yards in total distance. Felt quite tired at the end of it, I can tell you so I was glad of a nap before afternoon tea. It brightened up the next day so I extended myself rather more. Did double the distance of the first day."

"Jolly glad to hear it", said Lefty, who was appalled to learn how little his mate had done.

"Yes, and on the third day I did double the distance again. Of Sundays walk, I mean", went on Knobbly. "On the first Tuesday, though, I decided to have a rest day." (Lefty nearly spilt his drink.) "However, on the following morning the notion of walking double the distance each day, of the one before, rather appealed to me so from that time on I followed the practice - down to the last yard, old chap. Had to have another rest day on the next Sunday before I really got into my stride but I kept up the regime, having my last walk on the second Thursday before returning home the next day."

At that point in the conversation, Knobbly fished his diary out and showed Lefty the daily entries of the distances he had covered and the cumulative total he had walked during his holiday. How far was it? ANSWER IN NEXT ISSUE.

CHEESED OFF IN CAERPHILLY

KEITH WARMAN

Being number 4 in an occasional series of offbeat excursions.

In its embryonic state, this article started life as an event report, but now appears under this heading for reasons soon to be apparent.

My confirmation of entry for the Caerphilly Summits Challenge had arrived, the description highlighted and the route marked onto the map. Travel arrangements were decided upon and I was anticipating an event in a personally unknown area. What followed was an act of inane stupidity. My well intentioned plans had gone awry; I arrived at 5.30 a.m. on the north-western outskirts of Cardiff, and ten minutes prior to the 7 o'clock start, I discovered the reason I was still alone and the venue still padlocked. I had arrived a day early!! I vowed this would never happen again.

When the frustration had ebbed, I decided to follow the route for a while, even though it was drizzling steadily and cloud level low. At 7.15 a.m. I set off and was soon walking sea-wards by the River Taff through pleasant woods with a cinder track underfoot. The width of the river surprised me, as did the crescendo of the tumbling water at the weir soon met. Over the river by a metal footbridge, with "Cardiff City" in white paint thereupon. Funny name for a bridge! Under the railway and through Radyr, passing fine residential properties.

The wet grass over the golf course meant knees downwards became drenched; the increasing wind and rain meant hair downwards likewise, so the uncommon ritual of donning the cagoule was performed on the 8th tee.. The golfing purists seemed unperturbed by the wet, perhaps their gaily-coloured raiment was magically water-repellent. Over the M4 and across two fields of horses. The going was quite arduous as the route climbed steadily through bracken and shrub. Waymarking was negligible, perhaps because the footpaths were little used.

More horses, inquisitive cows and shorn sheep were passed as the directions guided me across common-type land, pastoral fields and through thick hedges. The continuing low clouds meant that no views were possible, which was a pity.

Avoiding the easy option of following the lane, I opted for the track up Garth Hill. The tops on this route do not exceed 1250 feet, but they all seemed prominent, both on the map and to the eye, when the swirling clouds allowed a fleeting glimpse. With 50 yards visibility and a few startled sheep, I made the summit plateau but failed to locate the trig. point at 1007 ft. As the description said "after trig. point return to track and continue" I carried straight on it, but this was the wrong one. A quick bearing check and along a narrow sheep trod through the heather, but the lane was getting no closer. Whilst resting on a rock with a drink, the cloud below cleared for a few seconds, long enough to give me quite a shock seeing the road and houses several hundred feet below. A further map check and I decided to descend as quickly as possible, which meant a wet heather-clinging drop down the hillside and through trees to find the lane. The route was picked up to the first checkpoint at Taff's Well, but of course the site was vacant due to my stupidity. The next hill was Craig Yr Allt and the top half was invisible; I thought it was a bit foolhardy to continue, so wet through and disillusioned, I wandered tarmacadamically back to the car.

To complete the misery, I managed to pick up a thigh strain on the descent of Garth Hill. However, I aim to enter this event in the future and hope for a clearer day to see this interesting area.

I was cheesed off in Caerphilly, and even the trainers leaked!!

DON SCOTT.....BULLOCK SMITHY HIKE SEPTEMBER 1ST/2ND 1990

There were something over 160 starters for this 56 mile event, amongst them being Ivan Waghorn, who I was pleasantly surprised to see, not knowing this has been a regular walk for him for the past 7 or 8 years. The only time I had done it before was back in about 1977 and my reason for entering this year was simple; I still had the badge from all those years ago but had long since lost the certificate and wanted one to make a match, as it were.

Like a few other Northern events there is no route description to follow, only grid reference checkpoints to reach. I thought I'd follow the crowd and just finish but Ivan got talking about his time the previous year of 18.06, a personal best, and how he'd like to get in under 18 hours, and I unwittingly found myself with him. At Bow Stones he was 3 minutes inside his record and off we pushed to Whaley Bridge via Moor Side. There is no doubt that one or more of the field track alternatives are shorter than the road loop but we kidded ourselves that they took more out of you. We missed the path down to the reservoir adding a couple of hundred yards extra and eroding the time in hand.

On the way up to Chinley Churn I began to feel bad, stomach knotting up, legs a combination of jelly and planks of wood, (ie my knees didn't want to bend and felt unsteady each time they did). I couldn't get any power going and the pleasant descent from the tent to the drinks point hardly helped. The feeling got worse on the ascent to Edale Cross where Ivan pulled ahead a little. We descended Jacobs Ladder more or less together and I managed to stick with him along the road, but I announced my intention of taking a long recovery rest at Edale, encouraging him to forget me and go for his record. He'd been gone 10 minutes or so before I felt a bit better, a mini Bounty bar and Penguin having helped. Strolling on, I decided to take Hollins Cross at a steady pace. Perhaps because of that I got gradually back into things, only pausing at Castleton to gulp down a couple of drinks.

I went up Cave Dale without pushing myself and once the level ground was reached went through a purple patch on and down to Peak Forest. There, to our mutual amazement, I met Ivan again. And although I felt sure I would burn myself out in a few more miles, I left with him for Millers Dale, taking his recommended "haute" route, which was considerably easier and quicker than the Hay Dale, etc. way I've always followed when linking up these two spots. At the barn, the half way point, we got our torches out for the coming night. Ivan was still pleased with his timings.

The weather had been overcast, windless and warm during the day, only once looking like a threat of rain. The climb out of Millers Dale was warmer still until the level plateau cooled us down. We had one or two uncertainties as to whether we were on the correct route and were preparing to follow a road off to the right when a strategically placed marshal's car told us we were already heading for the next checkpoint, about 300 yards away, some distance from Chelmorton itself, by which name it is called.

On we went again to the Earl Sterndale, the last mile and a half by the beginnings of a road section that was to take us all the way through to Axe Edge and then The Cat and Fiddle except for a couple of hundred yards. We were told to change out of shorts at Earl Sterndale and I grumbled at this. But I was glad to have been made to do it, because after donning a Helly Hensen top at Axe Edge it got chilly. We nearly managed to do a short circular walk round and back to the Axe Edge checkpoint before realising a mistake had been made. Shortly afterwards we tried measuring the distance up the road to The Cat and Fiddle by timing the lights of cars as they passed us before vanishing over the top. It is one way of passing the time.

The much maligned route up Shining Tor is now a well made path you could walk in sandals if you wanted to; and the way down to Pym's Chair had been made easier by the dry weather we've been having. From there, the last two stretches are supposedly 5 miles each. Don't you believe it. We took about an hour and a quarter to do the first one to Moor Side and over two hours the second. The distances on the tally card do not always correspond with those given in the rules showing grid reference numbers and everything is in round figures anyway, so if you look like you have done an impressive time for some section, you may have to think again.

We debated which route to take back, electing to take the Lyme Park one. We didn't think we went slow over this but a couple whom we had passed going up Shining Tor and had lost sight of finished about half an hour ahead of us because from Moor Side they had followed the road down to Higher Disley and then the A6 to Hazel Grove. That way is marginally longer on the map but much easier underfoot. Anyway, we hadn't come all the way from Kent to walk down a road when there was a slight climb alternative including boggy bits, stiles, routefinding trouble (YES, half a mile from the end!!) and a last look at the Macclesfield Canal.

For some time Ivan had been expressing anxiety over our time. We were going too fast and in danger of posing him with a new challenge next year. Moreover, he said he wasn't used to finishing overnight walks in the dark and he'd been looking forward to seeing the dawn. These thoughts vanished when a posse of four others suddenly appeared on our heels, spurring his competitive spirit to a last dash for the Scout Hut and a time of 17.36 for us, a neat, exact half hour clipped off his last years time. I doubt if I'll be with you, Ivan, when you go to beat that next year. We know where minutes can be shaded, though.

SHOTLEY PENINSULA CHALLENGE 8TH SEPTEMBER 1990

Hasn't this guy got anything better to do than write reports of walks he's been on?.....No, is the answer. (Blame Laurie Lowe; he prints them, but promises to stop doing so if someone else will send him something for the Newsletter.)

Well, Laurie was on this one too. He told me at the start that he decided to enter the Shotley thinking he'd stay overnight locally with his daughter.....who lives in Luton..... which resulted in him driving further to reach the event than if he had gone from home. This didn't inspire me with much confidence in his geographical sense but I write as somebody who once got lost in Knole Park. The Shotley Peninsula, by the way, is the little bit of Suffolk just south of Ipswich.

This is a biannual event so there is no good me telling you all the points about the route (which changes slightly each time, I think) because in two years you will have forgotten it. We got less of a riverside view of the Stour and Orwell than 4 years ago although what remained was good to see. The pubs looked more inviting but perhaps that was only due to the good weather. The checkpoints were quick to see to my needs, water for the dog, yoghurt for me.

If you are one of those who baulk at carrying a 20 page route description for a 30 mile event, fear not. This one is 2 pages long and as easy as anything to follow. In the words of "The Ballad of Wing Kang Loo", (Anybody know it??), you steer "East 'Nor-West by South till", if not "the pirate he did discover", you complete the circuit. The Shotley is another easy walk to reach via the M25 and A12, is better than the Blackwater and in an unappreciated corner of the country. It offers a choice of three route distances ranging from 15 to 30 miles and is very well organised. If you have not been on it before make a note to do so in 1992.

DON SCOTT

LEA VALLEY MERIDIAN WALK 29TH SEPTEMBER 1990DON SCOTT

What can I say about a straight line walk of 25 miles?

The idea of roughly walking the Greenwich Meridian (if only for 25 miles, NOT a complete circumnavigation of the globe) was an appealing one. Moreover, it didn't seem far to travel to get there so I envisaged a relatively long lie in on the Saturday morning in question. On the latter point I was sadly mistaken. I had elected to drive to the finish at Ware and travel to the start by the coach that would be provided. What neither the application form nor the later instructions said was what time the coach would leave. When I telephoned to enquire, I was horrified to learn it was 0630, which meant leaving home at around 0530, to be sure of finding the College in Ware, and getting up at about 0430!! If you can arrange a disinterested driver to drop and collect you to and from the start/finish, you will be spared this.

I suggested to Liz that we could safely take Sam, our Springer Spaniel, because canals normally cut under roads and are fenced off from adjacent land. I say canals but it is difficult to know where the canal(s) and rivers end or join each other in this area. A glance at the map shows a confusion of waterways running (or just staying) side by side with one another. Added to which there are a number of lakes, reservoirs and filter beds beside and in the middle of the waterways. I knew Sam would find the water irresistible and such proved to be the case. Her only problem was getting out sometimes when the concrete banks were a foot or so high. This always ended in me fishing her out by the scruff of her neck and getting quite wet in the process.

There are about half a dozen checkpoints, a lot for so short a distance and Raynet were on hand for communications. This is something I had reason to be thankful for because I left my car keys and some money behind at Waltham Abbey and at the next checkpoint was asked if I was the man with the dog who had done so. This was before I knew they were missing. The promise of their delivery at the next checkpoint but one gave me peace of mind as I had no spare key available.

As for the walk itself, there is not a lot to say. The first half is depressingly ugly, a semi-derelict industrial wasteland through north London. What a hell we make of some parts of our planet. I am one who positively enjoys parts of the Lancashire and Yorkshire belt of our industrial heritage. Time there has mellowed the former grim visages to some degree; not wholly, of course, but enough. There is a sense of the mills and 19th Century buildings having arisen from the ground and being an integral part of the landscape. Perhaps this comes from so much of them being of stone construction, I don't know. But passing through the lower Lea Valley I could not believe that anyone would feel a similar affinity to this area in a hundred years time that I feel for the cotton and wool manufacturing areas now.

The second half of the route doesn't quite make up for the first half. To be fair, the prospect improves with each mile and you are mostly unconscious of the urban belt immediately to the west, so well screened is it, but there is nothing to excite your eye or grip your imagination, which would, at least, exercise your mind away from the lack of route finding difficulties. So you "rattle along like your mistress's tongue" and if "your speed will outrival the dart" you will, like Peter Barnett (completing it for the third time in it's three years - there's great willpower for you), finish it quickly, beating the checkpoint opening times. Others, like me, will go at a human pace and endure more because of the longer time we take.

As you enter Ware you do get a scenic "lift". An old malting town, the malthouses and warehouses of earlier time have been superbly converted into flats, retaining the character of their former use. They overlook the river/canal and are well worth a glance if you are in the area.

Food is provided at the finish and we were generally well looked after at checkpoints. There is no provision for a results report...yet, because when I asked the end registration official, the question was greeted with surprise but interest.

Will I do it again? No, I don't think so. But do not be put off by my negative report, particularly if you want to add another certificate and badge to your collection. I certainly would not rule it out of the list of walks you should experience, and that, perhaps, is testimony to the organisation.

ALONG WITH THE HORNED HELMETS....Part 4.

by KEITH WARMAN.

The fourth stage of this Saxonian saunter involved a train journey from Sandling, near Hythe, to Sandwich (to rejoin the end of stage 3), then following the Way to Hythe and finishing with a two-mile road walk back to Sandling station.

With a sweltering day brewing, I drove to Sandling to board the earliest train to Margate. It was the first Saturday in May and the dawn chorus was several hours old when I stepped into the charming environs of the station. The rhododendrons were displaying their best, the sky was cloudless and a more idyllic setting could not be envisaged. In a few years' time, transcontinental trains would be hurtling through here. Over the footbridge (two planks missing) to read the TV monitor to confirm my train.

The journey to Sandwich took me past the channel (service) tunnel workings at Shakespeare Cliff; I knew that I would have a more leisurely view from the clifftop later in the day. "Ici est Dover Priory" said the lady station announcer. Europe is getting closer by the day! "Going far?" enquired the guard as I strolled along the platform at Sandwich; "Back to Sandling" I said, "and Yourself?" "Oh... er....just to Ramsgate" came the surprised reply as the train accelerated away.

A quick time check, then along the Old Town Wall to meet and follow our old friend, the River Stour. A tarmac field-path took me to the immaculate clubhouse of the Royal St. George's golf course. Thatched waiting chalets were passed, being a sort of upmarket Hastings seafront type. Sorry Hastings! The emptiness and stillness was eerie; in my mind I could hear packed galleries cheering along Messrs. Nicklaus, Palmer, Watson, etc. The waymarking was excellent, a green swarth having been cut directly seawards, past many "To The Sea" signs across the undulating dunes. As I crossed the drive to the Prince's Golf Course, well-heeled ladies were speeding towards the clubhouse in their Rovers and Jaguars.

Ahead lay the English Channel, and a right turn took me along the shingle fore-shore, past a fisherman leaning on his moped, to the curious Sandwich Bay Estate. This is an incongruous collection of large houses being laid out amidst low dune and marshland. There was no shelter on this stretch, and there would be none until Deal was attained. I stared to sea, searching in vain for the Goodwin Sands. This treacherous mass, which has claimed an estimated 50,000 lives in the past 500 years, deserved a pause in my travels.

The heat was starting to build up and I knew that taking on board fluid was a high priority. A few distant ships were visible as I decided the shingle foreshore was harder going than the lower path slightly inland. This goes alongside the Royal Cinque Ports golf course. Dawn devotees were mashie niblicking their way up and down, including him of the loud expletive, uttered when a hungry open-mouthed bunker swallowed his slice without bouncing.

On the outskirts of Deal, I missed the few remains of Sandown Castle, and was soon striding along the promenade. Fishermen were being joined by day-trippers; "Darren, get the deckchairs" and "no onion in mine". The ancient streets deserved a longer linger another day, I promised myself, perhaps easing the conscience as I continued along to the unremarkable pier. Opened in the 1950's, it was one of the last built in the country. Even the sign "Entrance Free Except For Fishing" failed to divert my chosen steps.

Looking quite outrageous at the end of the promenade was, according to the display board, "A 1990 Development Of Prestigious Flats". How unfair that this monolithic slab completely overshadows, according to my eyes, the 1540 development of a prestigious castle. What would Henry VIII have said? I wondered what, in 450 years' time, would be the other side of the fortress?

The wide paved foreshore to Walmer was very pleasant, and a cracking pace was possible past gardens, crazy golf and the lifeboat station. Walmer Castle, a bit inland and the official residence of the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, was a much bigger affair than that at Deal; I preferred the latter for compactness. A bold dais pronounced Julius Caesar's landing place in 55 BC, although I suspected the exact place is often debated.

The salty air did not deter the rampant growth of fennel, irises, bluebells and wild cabbage, all in the shingle. At Deal, a ladybird had hitched a lift on my shorts and seemed content enough not to depart until Kingsdown where, on a wall by the Zetland Arms, I helped a Dutch couple to locate their path back to Dover.

With all respect to Bishopstone, near Herne Bay, after Kingsdown was the first real cliff of note on the route. The rack and pinion cog was engaged to ascend a well-worn path past yet another golf course. Alive with grasshoppers, the path from here is without doubt the world record "300 yards to the farm barrier"; it must be $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles! Bockhill Farm is owned by the National Trust, the arable fields occupying the maximum land area possible.

The drone of a hovercraft was audible for a while, long after the vessel had disappeared into the haze. This was all very good. On past the coastguard station, with radar scanner, to the Dover Patrol Memorial to those who perished in two World Wars. "They died that we might live and may be worthy of their sacrifice" I humbly read.

Just before St. Margaret's at Cliffe, I passed two backpackers bound for Sandwich. The bay below was a pleasant surprise, reminding me more of Devon than Kent. At the old lookout, I dropped through the undergrowth and down twisting steps to wander across the car park towards the Coastguard Inn. I too was on the lookout, for refreshment, and the cool shandy slid effortlessly down the slipway. The old path off the beach is now blocked so a road detour is necessary. I turned inland by the snoozing gent with his newspaper hat. The path continued up the lane by the Pines Garden, the entrance fee to which was avoided by peeping over the perimeter fence. It was beautifully laid out around a big statue of Churchill. Up the chalky track to the clifftop, passing where the former path from the beach joins by a stark sign "Path to Cove Permanently Closed".

There was an evocative feeling in striding along the cliffs and I thought of John Merrill on his around Britain walk twelve years before me. Some parts are not as attractive as others, but overall it must have been quite an adventure.

After the old windmill is the South Foreland lighthouse, then a field of potatoes on one side and disused lookout posts on the other. I passed Fan Hole and Langdon Hole. Between the two, I noticed an evil slit in the chalk cliff which dropped down to the foreshore. More cliff-falls here, with road-mender's tape on metal posts.

With the eastern docks of Dover in view, I made for an old railway line which dropped on a ledge slowly down towards the town. An 800-yards long row of rusty steel poles, resembling the skeleton of some giant advertising hoarding, was a real eyesore. Perhaps Dover District Council had plans to unfurl a huge banner "Welcome To England" for, as the marketing department will have it, we are now in "White Cliffs Country". In a similar vein, one cannot now visit Dorset, the Yorkshire Dales, Howarth and district, South Tyneside or mid-Wales; instead you must aim for Hardy, Herriot, Bronte, Cookson and Red Kite country respectively. All sounds a bit pretentious and unnecessary to me. An oriental lady who asked me to take her photograph insisted on having these poles as a backdrop rather than the harbour below.

The path twisted around a car park and down past a row of cottages to dip under the Jubilee Way, with 7'-0" headroom. The docks were busy. I halted for refreshment on the promenade in a Hastings-style shelter, and ate my sandwiches as well as my words. The beach within the harbour looked surprisingly acceptable, as did the view along the curved terrace opposite. Towards the Western Docks, loud radios were the order of the day, but I hastened over the swing bridge along nameless roads. The source of the constant metal clanging confused me for a while, until discovering it emanated from the hammers of three fitters on the summit of a 150 feet high crane. I asked a man if this was Limekiln Street. He replied "I was born here but have lived in Australia for 35 years. I've been back a fortnight and this was Limekiln Street before I left!" I trusted his memory (which proved correct) and was soon ascending Archcliffe Road with the promontory of Shakespeare Cliff looming ahead.

The completion of this stage to Hythe will be described in the next instalment of this long distance Saxon saga. (Ed)

RHINE CRUISE

by PAT CLARKE

Appetites increased by the fresh air and legs aching we sat down willingly to three hearty meals a day on the cruise ship "Filia Rheni", our home for a week.

Perhaps I should add that the fresh air was from standing on deck and watching the scenery scroll gently by as we moved along this magnificent river and that the legs were unaccustomed to standing or sitting around for such long periods.

It was a slightly out of character holiday for us but gave us an opportunity for a quick glimpse of the walking possibilities alongside the Rhine or the Moselle.

The Germans are famous for their "fusswegs" of course and the scenery we passed was superb for walking. Castles perched on the hillsides, vineyards were cultivated down to the river, small towns nestled among the hills. Here and there were statues and other landmarks on summits. Campsites picturesquely placed by the riverside abounded and there were guest houses or hotels aplenty.

Try this word-square puzzle by Bryan Clarke. Find 20 words, all related to challenge walking. The words can be written left or right, up or down, or diagonally. Do this successfully and you win absolutely no prize at all - not even a free entry for next year's Wealden Waters!

The correct answer will be given in the next issue of the newsletter.

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|CSNDWAFRUITCAKEXPGIK|
|RBEKHIIMKMZWPNJXZE|
|GGCWPKTCJVZEAFFVARZCR|
|ZTPHLRVVBOQBRYMUDEAO|
|FOUXEDIATSRIFINHXHDI|
|BXGPGCYQFSXDRLQVSMIT|
|HDBTPNKVQJRMNJCEEELE|
|TQASXTIPBYBEWISQLEAB|
|TZERRDQROZWNNWIITHX|
|BHKGKEDYSIFTVNQITVSR|
|WNIGHOTPIONPOSUUSORB|
|ASXLLHSSOAITUFDRRGAC|
|LCLQLBQTIQNERWSOMMZ|
|KATRVSPLOLJSEYABLWFT|
|EJSTJAVZNOBKXGVIYHWH|
|RZHPTDSXULBNPDGINKSB|
|TXEHAJWLADIEIALLDGTP|
|NSSAPMOCSKPRMCWLKUR|
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STOP PRESS... THREE FORESTS. WAY 3rd/4th November 1990 ...by Don Scott(again!!)

Do not believe all the horror stories you hear about this walk. Yes, there are pathless ploughed fields which can be muddy if it is wet; route-finding difficulties on occasion; some, but only a very few, improvements that could be made to deal with groups of walkers arriving at checkpoints. But all these are common to other walks. Perhaps the thing which sets this one apart is the shorter daylight hours available, although that depends on your speed of walking - the faster you are the less of the night you suffer. We were very fortunate in that the weather more or less behaved itself and there was a glorious near full moon that shone like a beacon the whole time, making the use of torches hardly necessary, even in the depths of Epping Forest. Also, on previous occasions, I believe the route was in reverse direction to the one we took and that may have added to complications in earlier years.

There were a few faces on it who, like me, were only there to qualify for the Triple Challenge; who had never previously had nor ever have again any intention of doing it (but how often is that said?). Apparently the entries were up from usual, as they were on the Wealden Waters, so the Challenge seems to have had a welcoming effect. In fact there were some people like Henry Bridge doing it to complete their 4th qualification for the Challenge, although that was probably not their motivation.

Essex is.....well, not the most stimulating of counties. There are few hills and those there are are not very high. Interest is maintained mainly by paying attention to not getting lost. There is not a great deal of each forest and you do not see much of what there is so it is the in between bits that matter most. You begin to look forward to the 6 or 7 miles of the River Stort, a canalised waterway, simply for the change it will bring. It was mostly very pleasant but unspectacular stuff. 10/12 hours solid rain would have made it distinctly less pleasant but thankfully we were fortunate.

Ron Roweth's son was part of a film making production unit that was recording the epic and they had to be admired for the way they stuck to their task through the night, filming and interviewing walkers who were probably a lot warmer than they were. Ron says their 4 hours of footage is going to be edited to a half hour. On the Sunday evening he was able to see the unedited (unexpurgated?) version and the following day, on the Group's monthly meeting, regaled us with what he had seen. I hope he can fix it up for Kent Group to be able to share the event organisers chance to see it as part of our 1991 programme.