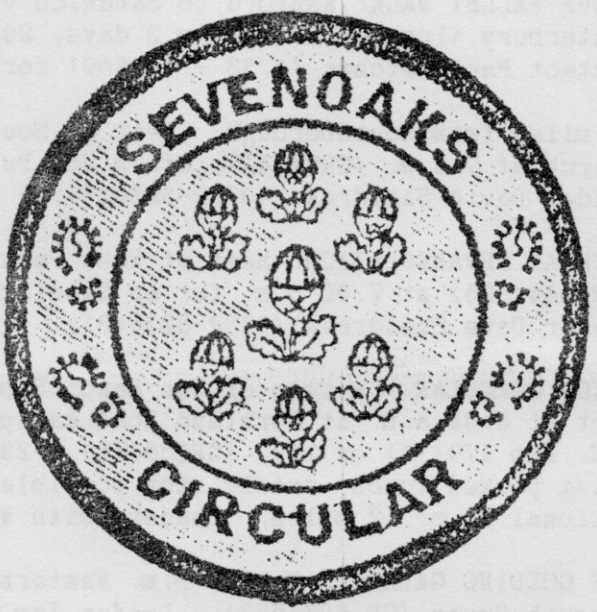
LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION Kent Group

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

NEWSLETTER



Number 30

APRIL 1993

COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN.....RON ROWETH [redacted]
TREASURER.....ALAN BALL [redacted]
SECRETARY.....DAVID SHELDRAKE [redacted]
MEMBERS:- ANN BEECHING [redacted], TREVOR BLAKE [redacted]
ANDREW BOULDEN [redacted], BRIAN BUTTIFANT [redacted],
BRYAN CLARKE [redacted], PAUL HATCHER [redacted]
TOM SINCLAIR [redacted] (Newsletter Editor).

KENT GROUP PROGRAMME TO AUGUST 1993:-

SAT/SUN 10/11 APR	STOUR VALLEY WALK: Ashford to Sandwich via Canterbury (lots of B&B's) in 2 days, 20 mls each Contact Paul Hatcher [redacted] for details.
SUN 18 APRIL	20 miles from Southborough. Meet at Southborough Church at 9 a.m. (GR576427, off A.26) Pub stop. Leader David Sheldrake [redacted].
THURS 13 MAY	PECKHAM PERAMBULATION. Meet at West Peckham Church (GR 644/526) at 7.00 p.m. for an Evening Walk. Leader Dave Sheldrake [redacted].
SUN 20 JUNE	SAXON CIRCULAR - a loop of the Saxon Shore Way. Meet at 8.30 a.m. at Portland Road car park, Hythe, O.S. Map 179(1") or 189, (GR158346). 23 miles, bring packed lunch, drinks stop possible. Optional 20 or 17 miles. Leader Keith Warman.
THURS 8 JULY	THE GOLDING GALLOP. Meet 7 p.m. Western Road C.P. Borough Green (GR 607/573). Leader Tom Sinclair [redacted].
SUN 18 JULY	CREAM TEAS WALK - Meet 9 a.m. near Pluckley Church (GR 926454). Leader Paul Hatcher [redacted]. About 20 miles. Possible Pub Stop.
SUN 1 AUGUST	WEALDEN WANDER - Meet 9 a.m. Ide Hill village hall car park (GR489517). Pub stop, food available. Leader Alan Ball [redacted] About 20 miles.
SUN 15 AUGUST	Meet at 9 a.m. at Staplehurst car park, Bell Lane (GR786431). Leader Kevin Puttock [redacted].
SAT/SUN 21/22 AUG	**WEALDEN WATERS MARSHALS' WALK** Make sure you are eligible for this FREE event by 'phoning Paul Hatcher to offer help on a checkpoint etc. A.S.A.P. Paul will NOT accept entries from Kent Group members until we have enough to run the walk on 9/10 October PROPERLY. As Laurie wrote in 1987: "YOUR GROUP NEEDS YOU".

Dear Fellow Kent Group Members,

If you were among the nearly 40 members who attended the A.G.M. on 29th January you will have heard that the Committee has (a) rashly agreed to let me take over the job of Newsletter Editor and (b) expressed concern that the rising costs of producing the Newsletter might lead to an increase in the Group subscription in 1994. It was not made entirely clear whether or not there was any connection between (a) and (b).

The names of the Officers and Committee members elected at the A.G.M. plus, with their approval, their 'phone numbers, are shown at the top of page 1. At the meeting votes of thanks were expressed to Pete and Pauline* Barnett for all their work during the 8 years of Pete's Chairmanship, to Laurie Lowe for editing and producing the Newsletter to a consistently high standard for 10 years and to Ron Roweth for his able work as Treasurer during the past 6 years.

*As many of us know one of the most onerous jobs they undertook was organising the provisions for the checkpoints on our events but because of all the work put in over the years Pauline has lists of what is needed at each checkpoint on the Sevenoaks Circular and the Wealden Waters so the job of **QUARTERMASTER** is ready made for a willing pair of hands (or two) to take it over. Pauline would, I am sure, be pleased to pass on any papers, hints and guidance or indeed to tell you what is involved if you are not sure about volunteering.

A new, smaller Kent Group badge was shown at the A.G.M. and is reproduced, in Black and White, on the cover along with the new Sevenoaks Circular badge introduced last year. Dave Sheldrake has supplies of the new group badge @ £1.25 each.

It was reported that, largely for financial reasons, neither the Channel Tunnel Walk nor the North Downs Way Loop Walk, both of which had been planned at the time of the last A.G.M., would now take place.

Concern was expressed at the meeting about the short time (11 days) it had taken for the Cleveland Hundred to become fully subscribed at 500 entries but the number of people needed to run such an event and the practical difficulty of running 2 '100's in a year were appreciated. (N.B. at the committee meeting on 8th February Dave Sheldrake was asked to write an appropriate letter to the National LDWA Committee).

The Committee will consider in due course the suggestion that future Annual General Meetings take the form of a short morning walk followed by a buffet lunch, possibly in a pub, and then an afternoon meeting.

The A.G.M was told that another successful Brecon Beacons weekend had been held earlier in January. You will find one person's view of it on the next page but before you turn over what about offering help on the WEALDEN WATERS on 9/10 October so as to be eligible for the **FREE** Marshals Walk on 21/22 August.

BRECON BEACONS WEEKEND 15 - 17 JANUARY 1993

On Friday 15 January stalwarts from Kent Group and guests from other groups assembled at Danywenallt Study Centre for what was to prove a Beer and Wind experience! Danywenallt is situated above Talybont, near Crickhowell at the head of the reservoir: an ideal spot for winter walking.* (* I agree with the comment but doesn't the water flow out of a reservoir at the foot? Ed.)

The first event was a social walk on Friday evening on a superb two-mile track to the pub where a variety of Real Ales was enjoyed. On Saturday two walks were on offer: a 16 miler over the tops or an 8 miler via the pub.

We climbed into the mist and soon felt the full force of the wind on the unpronounceable peaks. It was difficult to stand up and a very real danger existed of being blown over the top. Nevertheless we stuck to our original plan and Peter Barnett, navigating, was gratified to find the cairn looming out of the mist. A relaxing walk down an old railway track sharpened our appetites for the superb Danywenallt dinner. In the evening a larger contingent enjoyed the social walk to the pub (and back again although I scarcely noticed their return! Ed.)

Sunday's walk was a shorter, muddy affair again visiting a pub. The Brecons weekend is now established and people were already looking forward to next year's scenario in the Welsh Hills.

Derek Wisdom LDWA 6300

N.B. Peter Barnett has already booked the Danywenallt Centre for the weekend including 21st January 1994.

BOOK NOW [redacted] TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT!

CLEVELAND HUNDRED 29/31 May 1993 and DARTMOOR HUNDRED 1994

Ron Roweth has taken over from Pete Barnett the job of organising the Kent Group's checkpoint at Hutton-le-Hole (41.6 miles) and he tells us that the opening (18.30 Sat) and closing (04.30 Sun) times may be changed slightly. Contact Ron for details and to offer help on the Dartmoor Hundred. The Committee has agreed, in principle, to run a checkpoint for that event on 28-30 May 1994 so Ron needs volunteers NOW.

Terry Bound, Cornwall and Devon Group Secretary, is the Event Organiser and he has written saying that the Marshals' Walk will start from Ivybridge at 8.00 a.m. on 30 April 1994. Please contact him direct if you would like to do the Marshals' Walk on [redacted], or write to him at [redacted], and let Ron know so that he can add your name to the list of helpers for the main event.

A PUNCHBOWL PILGRIMAGE by Laurie Lowe

"A Pilgrimage is, of course, an expedition to some venerated place to which a vivid memory of sacred things experienced, or a long and wonderful history of human experience in divine matters, or a personal attraction affecting the soul impels one.....And as to the method of doing this, we may go bicycling (although that is a litle flurried) or driving (though that is luxurious and dangerous, because it brings us constantly against servants and flattery); but the best way of all is on foot, where one is a man like any other man, with the sky above one, and the road beneath, and the world on every side, and time to see it all."

(Hilaire Belloc, 1906)

There were the usual familiar faces at Witley Village Hall as walkers assembled in the grey early morning light to make their annual pilgrimage around the route of this popular event in Surrey. A number of the Kent Group are locked into the 'number of completions' table which usually accompanies the results for this event, and they have to turn up each year in order to maintain their positions of honour in the event hierarchy.

The weather was dull and grey with spells of fine mizzle but very mild for early February, and the well-drained, sandy tracks which make up most of the route were a real treat after the recent mud of the Gatliff and Winter Tanners events. The route, which has been largely unchanged for several years, is unusual in that there are virtually no stiles for the first 28 miles, but from then on they come thick and fast, interspersed with electrified fences and fiendishly tight kissing gates.

We progressed - at what was, for us, a nice steady pace - revelling in the excellent conditions underfoot. At about half distance Andrew's 'A-Team' came swinging past being held in check by our senior citizen, who was heard reminding his companions that they were supposed to be "training not straining"! How pleasant their brief company was compared with that of an arrogant runner who had passed us earlier. Clad in a sickly fluorescent yellow T-shirt, he stormed along the narrow path bellowing "Stand aside, stand aside, let me through." It was, of course, pure chance that Ron's stick rapped smartly against his knees and my elbow made contact with his ribs as he surged past like some mighty warrior sweeping aside the peasants.

The checkpoints were up to the standard to be expected of the Surrey Group, with the ever popular fruit and rice on the menu at at least two of them. Kettlebury Ridge was as enjoyable as ever, with good views all round and this year we took the long haul up from Sandy Lane to the rim of the Punchbowl at a much more sensible speed, arriving at the YHA checkpoint in better shape than on some previous occasions.

A good event, with a pleasant route and very smoothly organised - but is it now time for a change of route? I found that this year I hardly needed to refer to the description, so familiar has the route become.

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DINNER 1992

At the Kent Group's annual Christmas Dinner Chairman Peter Barnett presented Tony Twyman with an engraved shield to commemorate himbeing the only person to complete the first ten Wealden Waters Walks. Tony and his charming wife were at the dinner as honoured guests for this historic occasion!

Another presentation was made to our Liaison Officer, Brian Buttifant, for the determination he has shown in working towards the amazing recovery made after the terrible injury to his leg last year. The meal and the walk beforehand were excellently organised and appreciated by all who attended. One absentee telephoned later to say that, to his chagrin, he had forgotten the dinner till it was too late. All agreed that the staff had coped extremely well with such a large group.

Bryan Clarke.

DANYWENALLT, BRECON BEACONS

"The Brecon Beacons in January. You must be mad. They lose SAS men out there!" Such was the reaction from my office colleagues. They, however, don't know the Kent Group.

Peter Barnett, this year retiring as Chairman of the Group (many think in order that he can concentrate on improving his fitness), took charge of all the arrangements which he duly carried out in his own inimitable style.

The weekend started at around six o'clock on Friday evening at Danywenallt, when those of us who have to earn a living met a select group who had been wandering around the Forest of Dean. Over dinner various bottles of wine and not a few cans of ale appeared (their contents disappeared, Ed.) and the talk soon turned, as it tends to at this time of year, to "hundred" entries and had anybody received their confirmation back? There was noticeable relief when we realised nobody else had heard anything until Peter announced he was number 3. This led to much muttering about contaacts, dark murmurings of the masons etc. and I began to wonder how he would get on chasing 499 fell-runners.

Fortunately the talk soon turned to an infinitely more important topic - the local pub. This, for many, is the raison d'etre of the whole weekend. Speaking personally I find the track to the pub in Talybont by far the most pleasant night-walk of the year. Yet, even here, there can be disagreement about the best route. Once at the pub, however, Derek, who knows about these things, gave us the benefit of his Wisdom and we ordered various pints of obscurely named beers, not all of which were, it must be said, to everybody's taste. They did nevertheless make for a short walk back to Danywenallt - or so it seemed.

Saturday morning arrived early. It does tend to if you share a room with Peter whose philosophy is more or less "I'm up - I think you should be up too"! This at six o'clock. However it did give plenty of time to plan a route for the day. The weather was distinctly wild and windy so considerable thought had to be given to a sensible route. Much to our disappointment Pen y Fan was deemed to be off-limits, mainly because conditions were so bad that there was a good chance that all that were counted out might not be counted in. It was decided to split into 2 groups, the "hard" and the "sensible", which would set out from the car park at the top end of Talybont Reservoir. The wind was so strong that keeping one's balance with any confidence was impossible.

We, however continued with this particular Barnett Challenge, along the edge of the ridge - mostly at 45 degrees such was the strength of the wind. Added to this was the driving mist which made conditions far from pleasant with non-existent views. That we had made the right decision and had not gone higher was eventually seen to have been correct when we descended to the relative calm of the Roman Road. The walk along the tops whilst exhilarating had been disappointing in that we had no good views of Cribyn, Pen y Fan or Corn Ddu. After a lunch stop in a sheltered gully we continued our walk back to Danywenallt on good tracks. As we passed the car park from where we had started, the cloud level lifted and we were able to see where our route along the ridge had taken us a few hours earlier.

Peter would never forgive me were I not to mention how accurate his navigation had been. I rather think he was somewhat surprised himself, but no doubt he would deny this. Although the walk had not been particularly long in terms of miles, I think we were all glad to reach the hostel with its welcoming cups of tea, cake and showers.

Saturday evening followed much the same pattern as Friday except that a few eccentrics at the pub insisted on crowning the festivities with pints of an evil brew aptly named "Old Peculiar". The fresh air and the beer ensured a good night's sleep for everyone - even Peter was up after seven o'clock, almost indolent.

Our final walk was a group walk at a most sensible pace, more or less reversing the first section of the 1989 Brecon Beacons Hundred across the hills to the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal and then back along the towpath by way of the Travellers' Rest to Talybont and thence, via our night-walk route - how different it looked in daylight, to Danywenallt which we reached at around half past two. This was a delightful walk with excellent views and plenty of good conversation. I particularly remember a most interesting exchange of opinions in a farmyard with a herd of Friesians brought in to escape the harsh winter weather. After tea and more cake we ("the workers") departed.

I think this idea of a mid-winter break is something that is very much enjoyed and appreciated by all the participants. I should like to thank Peter for all his efforts in making the weekend successful.

Martin Fox.

A KENTISH QUIZ BY YES, A HIGH SIN GIRL

Section A Where are the following pubs?

1. The Bonny Cravat
2. The Cat and Custard Pot
3. The Honest Miller
4. The Compasses Inn
5. The Kentish Horse
6. The Rorty Crankle
7. The Hop Bine
8. The Hop Pole
9. The Pepperbox
10. The Artichoke

Section B What is the meaning of these terms in Kentish Place Names?

1. Forstal
2. Chart
3. -den
4. Boughton
5. -ness
6. Capel
7. Hatch
8. -hurst
9. Minnis
10. Hoath

Section C Which places in Kent have associations with these people?

1. General Wolfe
2. Sir Thomas Wyatt
3. William Caxton
4. Sir Edward Dering
5. Sir Oliver Hart Dyke
6. Sir Thomas Boleyn
7. Dame Ellen Terry
8. Charles Darwin
9. Samuel Palmer
10. William Hazlitt

Section D Which is the odd one out, and why?

1. Wittersham, Cranbrook, Woodchurch, Meopham, Brasted.
2. Beult, Little Stour, Teise, Len, Bourne.
3. Cowden, Headcorn, Chevening, Ash and Egerton Churches.
4. Cooling, Chilham, Deal, Westerham, Tonbridge.
5. Linton, Paddock Wood, Sutton Valence, Pluckley, Yalding.
6. Borough Green, Shoreham, Ightham, Harrietsham, Charing.
7. Allington Castle, Owletts, Knole House, Quebec House, Chartwell.
8. Hollingbourne, Wrotham, West Malling, Cuxton, Otford.
9. Aylesford, Barming, Rochester, Wateringbury, East Malling.
10. Lower Halstow, Aldington, Hythe, Borden, Upchurch.

Section E What do you know?

1. Where is the highest point in Kent?
2. Where are there more than 24 oast houses?
3. Which village has a quintain?
4. What are Fuggles, Ruffers and Apple Puddings?
5. Which village has a sign showing Siamese twins?
6. Which of the Cinque Ports are in Kent?
7. Where is "May's Folly"?
8. Where is the Pharos, and what is it?
9. Where could you see chessmen cut out of yew trees?
10. What are Roundels, Napoleons, Early Rivers and White Hearts?

In case you have not already guessed the compiler of that quiz was Shirley Higgins who feels that we should keep our eyes (and our minds) open while we are walking in our own county. She is offering a mystery prize to the person with the most points and says "answers to the Editor by June 30th". She also says "in the event of a tie the first set of answers drawn from the walking boot will win the prize". I do hope Shirley is going to check the answers and tot up the scores: several of the questions have me stumped, I might award 24 points for answering the "Oast Houses" question correctly and none of my boots are suitable for the purpose she has in mind. Tom S.

THE NINTH GATLIFF MARATHON

*Setting off on 29th November 1992 it seemed, as we waded through the overflowing streams, that it was to be a repeat of the first Gatliff. However it was later agreed that it was not quite as bad; the knee-deep slurry near the motorway being absent this year. The usual large number of Kent Group members was in attendance again and most found the route to be tough and tiring with the time limit not over generous!**

One Kent member took an early bath when attempting to jump an overflowed ditch. Another suffered two "punctures" when, one by one, his boots disintegrated. He managed to continue with several metres of insulating tape wrapped around them. His trainers were efficiently brought out to the next checkpoint and they were carried until the boot tape burst when he changed to the trainers. The organisation and friendliness were once again superb. *Bryan Clarke.*

* At least one Kent member found the time limit distinctly UNgenerous but the friendliness and concern of both the organisers and fellow group members were very much to the fore when he stumbled to the finish by torchlight. Tom S.

A RETURN TO FITNESS

by Brian Buttifant

Well, things could have been much worse; so I am immensely grateful to the hospitals' skills and the encouragement of my friends. All the visits to hospitals and home and the good wishes generally kept my walking interests alive and this in turn gave me a push in the right direction. Early last year I enjoyed checkpointing at our county events and seeing many friends - another incentive to walk the event next time.

It was a great delight to take an active role in our Invicta 100, having been very involved in the planning. It was nice for me, like many others, to see things go right on the day - a day the whole group can look back upon with pride. Another joy was to join, in June, a group social walk of 20 miles, my first long walk, with no ill effects during or afterwards; things were looking brighter for the future, steady progress.

My next milestone, a month later, was my first event for a year - the Rottingdean Windmill Walk. As I had done the previous nine 26-mile events it didn't seem this was the time to do a shorter distance. Not an easy walk some may say, but taken gently I achieved it, finishing to great applause from team mates to win a trophy for our local pub in Kemsing.

I finished the year having completed another four events, including the Gatliff 50k, so prospects were even brighter. Three events have been completed this year, plus joining the group on the Brecon weekend, so the next hurdle is the Surrey Summits. Walking really does seem to be helping my leg; my physio agrees and signed me off last year.

Car driving is not yet possible with safety so again I am extremely grateful for the many, many lifts being offered to me. At the annual dinner in December I had a very pleasant surprise when I received a trophy from the Group. "For Courage" said the inscription - I think all walkers (LDWA) go in for some body abusement so I feel I'm no exception. Your help has helped me a lot, Sincerely, Brian.

MORE NEWS FOLLOWING THE WEALDEN WATERS WALK

Despite what was said in the Walk Report the Weir Wood search party strongly deny getting lost when they walked round the reservoir hoping to find the missing walker. They used the opportunity to retrieve the clippers* on that section of the route and returned to the checkpoint to find the missing person had checked in and gone home.

Have you heard about the guy who broke his false teeth while eating a bread roll at the Finish? More news: no blame can be attributed to the caterers; it appears that the plate had broken before during that weekend and had been glued together! He has now invested in a metal plate. He is not amused when called "Jaws". Bryan C.

* **STOP PRESS** A clipper marked "WWW" was found on a stile at Springhill Farm on Wednesday 3rd February 1993. On being informed of this discovery the "Weir Wood Checkpoint Charlie" blandly suggested that it might have been there since 1991! How's that for imperturbability?

FROM MY DIARY, 26th JANUARY 1993 **Harry Bishop (4734)**

Went out on a bitterly cold and frosty morning and did the Tanners today. Two weeks ago I sat up in bed listening to the gale outside and clutching a knee twice its normal size. I remember thinking how lucky I was to be there, tea and digestive biscuits to hand, etc.

However, this morning I got away at 7.30 a.m. and, as I passed the offices next to the Depository, I saw the security man standing there reading his paper, immobile. The sun came out, the ground frost crackled under my Xmas-fed footsteps, all was well for the first few miles, the coffe never tasted better at my first, short stop.

A couple of workmen bid me a cheerful "Good Morning" as I wended my way to Logmore Lane but shortly afterwards I was scared out of my pants by two vociferous dogs at Squires Farm. I tentatively edged my way through the deserted (for the day) buildings making sure the fence between me and them was intact. The weather now turned dull and by the time I got to Leith Hill tower it was cold and miserable; it was lonely also, not a being or a bird in sight.

It had been easy enough underfoot up to this point but the frost died away and the ground became treacherous, terribly muddy and wet as I traversed the fields to Forest Green, Cotton Row and the Ewhurst Road. I stopped for lunch on a conveniently wide-planked stile and considered the gloomy day, the muddy fields, the dirty looking sheep and the climb ahead of me. No chance of handing in my ticket today!

I carried on and it started raining as I walked towards Peaslake, on the way passing the cemetery where I changed into wet gear under the shelter of the lych gate roof. As I climbed the path next to the Hurtwood Inn, I remembered other days at Peaslake when, in the 50's, on hot (always hot) sunny, summer afternoons we carried the cricket bag up that same path and played our games with wonderful views to the Downs. The pitch and hut, alas, long gone. More stumbling and slipping across fields and along paths with the rain steadily but not heavily continuing to plague my way.

At Abinger I collapsed in the bus shelter and viewed the sodden mess remaining of my day's sustenance, picked at it and threw the rest in the bin. The next five miles to the hostel dragged. Every foot of the way was a battle in the mire and the tracks left by the bikers did not help. Eventually I climbed up to and arrived at the NDW which itself was a sea of mud, channeled and divoted, and ready to break my legs at a moment's notice. I opted for the bridleway higher up and then the road. Discretion became the better part of my valour on this wet, drear and dank afternoon.

At Tanners I sat on the bench, fixed up my head torch, ate an apple and carried on. Not much further and the lights of Leatherhead beckoned. One last obstacle; a large tree had come down across the path leading to the railway arch. I had to career off into the adjoining jungle to circumvent if. keeping an eye open for the Surrey lynx(es) whilst so doing.

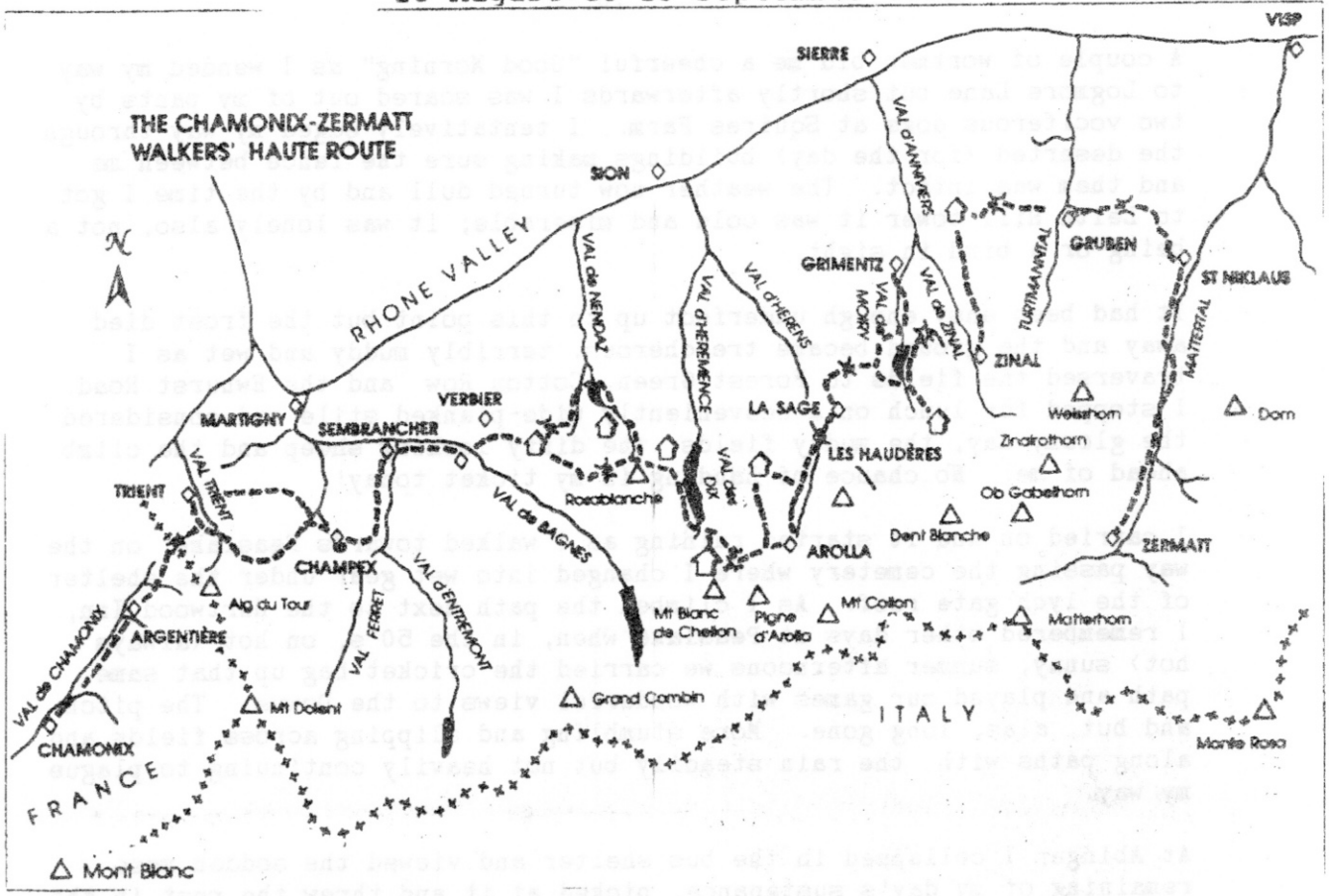
I slipped and fell down twice in quick succession. After keeping my feet all day, at the last gasp, the ooze got me. The air was blue but, no harm done, I wandered into Leatherhead and bought a bottle of wine to mollify the situstion on my arrival at home. As I went by the offices previously mentioned, the security man was still standing there, reading his paper and seemingly unmovedfrom his morning's stance. I found this strange so I'm going to check one day to see whether he's a dummy!

I crawled to the car and reached it at 7 p.m. - 11½ hours!

I won't ask J. Westcott for a certificate.

WALKING THE HAUTE ROUTE WITH RON
and Ann and Jill and Dave

28 August to 13 September 1992



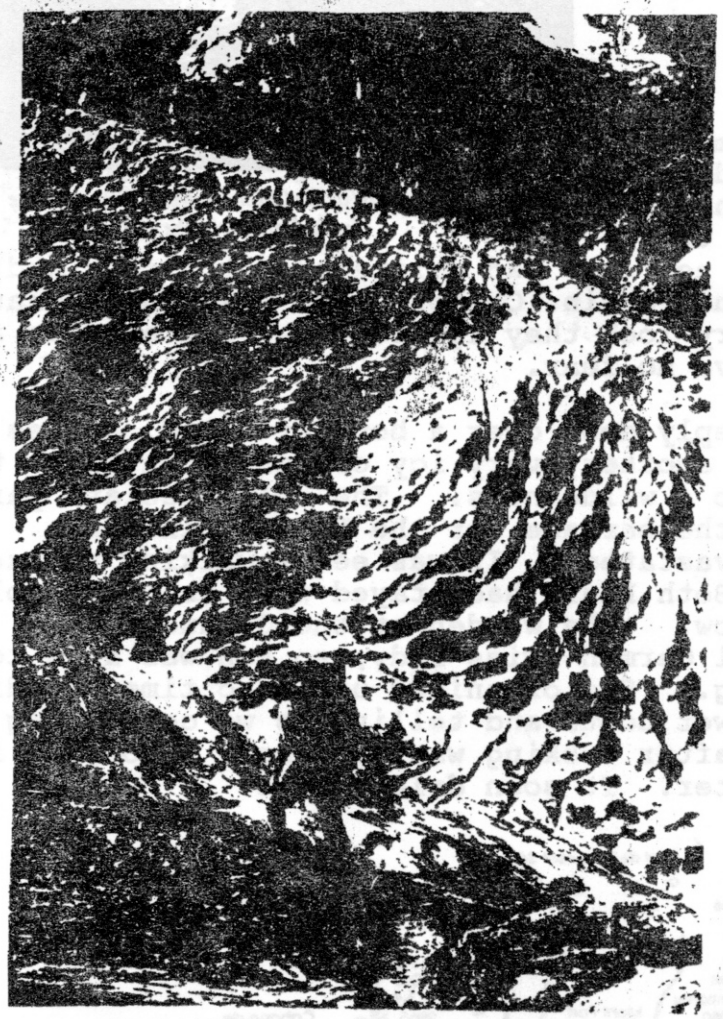
Kev Reynolds book on the Haute Route was published in August, 1991, and, full of enthusiasm after a magical holiday walking the Alpine Pass Route, I presented Ron with a copy with the comment 'How about this for 1992?'

We travelled to St. Gervais on the overnight train from Paris and reached Chamonix at 10 a.m. (an hour late - SNCF not BR) Saturday morning, having left Victoria at noon the previous day. Seven venture scouts from Maidstone were in the next compartment; they also were walking the Route, but camping.

Fortified by a late breakfast, we set off for Triente, some 22k. away over the Col de Balme. The weather thought otherwise. We were glad to depart from Chamonix; it was noisy and the traffic heavy along the few hundred metres of road walking at the start of our trek. As we turned off the road it started raining, off and on, and the cags came on and off but by Argentiere it was raining in earnest and the col at 2204m didn't seem quite so attractive. We met up with a lone walker, Paul (1 - from Warrington) and he stayed with us for several days. By the time we reached Le Tour we were soaked and pleased that the CAF Refuge had places for us. It was warm, we could dry ourselves and our clothes, and it was comfortable. Soon our gear was spread over every available radiator. Ann's bright yellow tee shirt adorned one of the dining room radiators all night. But we were only 13k along the route and our spare day for emergencies had gone.

After a false alarm at 5.30 (Paul's watch), Sunday dawned bright and clear and we set off metaphorically singing up to the pass. Mont Blanc was behind us, snow covered, clear and beautiful. Despite many stops to look and take photographs we made it to the Col in good time and stopped for a drink at the small refuge, ruled by a tiny lady with a large voice. She terrified a tall young American who had the temerity to walk on her newly washed floor.

We reached Triente by noon and decided that since the day was good we would make up our lost day by pressing on to Champex over the Fenetre d'Arpette. A high and difficult pass which should be attempted by only strong walkers and experienced mountaineers I have since read. We crossed the River Triente to join the TMB from Forclaz and immediately lost the path. Ron knew it was above us and we contoured through nettles, and scrub and climbed up hanging on to tree trunks for dear life. Finally, we reached the path along a bisse after wasting a lot of energy (real and nervous).



The Trient Glacier seen from the Fenêtre d'Arpette

The walk to the Col (Fenetre d'Arpette) was quite something. The path takes you alongside the Triente glacier, blue and wrinkled. Tiny figures below us were soldiers of the Swiss Army practising glacier skills. The size of the glacier is awesome. It was a long, hot climb to the Col but we reached it eventually; the first at 4.05 and the last at 4.25. We then boulder hopped down to the valley, anxiously looking for waymarks to ensure we stayed on route.

The hotel at Arpette was doubly welcome because we were very tired. It had been a long, hard day and we were not yet fully conditioned to climbing such heights.

The next day (Monday) was a gentle stroll along valleys to Le Chable which we reached at about 4.00. Midway we stopped at Sambrancher for a drink. Inside was a local who took a great interest in our walk but as he left he commented, in French, that Ann (Sayer) was a grande femme from a country with petites montagnes. He was quite small and unprepossessing but he drove away in the very latest and largest Volvo. Lucky it was a short, easy day, because the rain gods visited us again and we watched with interest the storm from the comfort of the hotel.

This rain had fallen as snow on high ground and we woke to beautiful sunshine and new snow on the Grand Combin and Mont Blanc. It was magnificent and became even more so as we climbed to the Cabane de Mont Fort perched high above the valley with spectacular views.

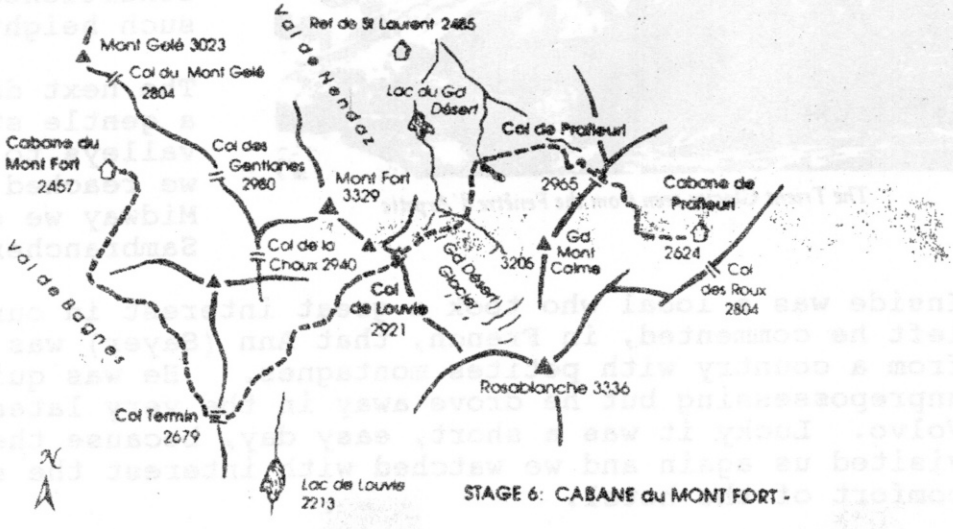
Only one person, another Paul (2 - from Whitby) was there when we arrived: the warden had gone down to meet the cable car to get supplies. "He is not staying here tonight," said Paul Whitby. "After he's made my dinner he is going down to the valley. "Poor warden, his night with wife, girl-friend or whoever disappeared when he saw us.

The path to the Cabin du Mont Fort with the Grand Combin in the distance

The view from the Cabane both that evening as the sun set and the next morning as it rose lighting up Mont Blanc and the Grand Combin was breathtaking.

Next day was difficult. Along the Sentier de Chamois, a lovely belvedere provided one didn't look too often at the 1500 metre plunge to the valley to the right, the new snow had obliterated the path and we were glad of the occasional chain. Chamois were peacefully grazing and apart from a desultory look they ignored us. The area is a national park so they have no fear.

The next section was steeply down over a boulder field, across a glacier and then up over another, very icy col and then onto the Col de Prafleuri and into a wilderness. The only desolate part of the walk. To build the barrage for the Lac de Dix the mountainside had been devastated. It was eerie walking through this lunar landscape. Both Pauls had stayed with us - sensible given the terrain and snow. The warden at the Cabane de Prafleuri was a wonderful German-Swiss lady, so Ron was able to natter to her all evening. She organised us in no time, finding newspapers to stuff our wet boots and telling us we could hang our wet gear in the kitchen after cooking was finished. None of it dried, but it didn't matter. It soon dried on us.



STAGE 6: CABANE du MONT FORT -

RAMBLERS, BYWAYS, KCC, SNAKES AND LADDERS, CUBS AND BROWNIES ETC.

On the day before the Chanctonbury Marathon Brian B and I attended the AGM of the Kent Branch of the Ramblers' Association. It was no more inspiring than most AGMs but we discovered that the venue, The Old School, Hadlow, would be suitable for use as a checkpoint and we heard news of footpaths likely to be opened or re-opened in the Whitley Forest and along the Royal Military Canal.

After the formal business two speakers from KCC (Highways Dept. and Rights of Way Unit) gave talks on "Public Rights of Way - KCC initiatives Now and in the Future". It does seem that the Rights of Way Unit intends to take the initiative and not just re-act to demands from different interests - I shall wait and see.

After asking a fairly pointed question about 4-wheel drive vehicles using byways I was cheeky enough to approach one of the speakers, over tea, for a copy of a booklet he had mentioned called "PATHWISE".

It is described as an active learning resource for 8 to 12 year-olds but I am sure many Kent Group members - not only those who are also involved in the Scout and Guide movements - would find it interesting. The various sections, all of them well-illustrated, cover map-reading, history of public rights of way, definitive maps (New Barns Farm Wealden Waters' checkpoint is just visible at the edge of the example), responsibilities of local authorities and landowners, conflicting interests, wildlife, walls and hedgerows, the countryside code(twice) and even a game of the "snakesand ladders" type. KCC will be supplying copies of "Pathwise" to Primary Schools and it will be available to others @ £7.50. Meanwhile I intend to bring my "review copy" to monthly meetings so that anyone interested can have a look. Tom Sinclair.

A WINDY WINTER WEEKEND IN WALES

by Ernie Bishop

Not having been able to make the trip in 1992, I was rather sceptical about the whole thing when Peter (Barnett) suggested that I join the Group's weekend jaunt this year. A day or two on those exposed hills didn't sound like much fun, particularly after all the rain we'd had.

Anyhow, his will was stronger than my resistance and the dark early hours of Friday, 15th January found Brian (Buttifant) and me, both half asleep, being driven by a very wide-awake Peter down the M.4 for a rendezvous at the Leigh Delamere service area. Here we were joined by Susan and Ivan and Phil Betts, although I suspect that the main reason for the stop was a second breakfast.

We then travelled in convoy to the Forest of Dean for a short walk. A few miles were enough to work up a thirst and make for a pub, although not without some hesitation, retracing of steps and, eventually, enquiries of a local workman. The beer was good and Peter cheered up some heavyweight regulars with his Marks and Spencer's overshoes.

Having eaten well at breakfast I managed to resist the food, but I have to report, for the record, that some members of the Group succumbed. A few miles back to the cars and a short drive to Crickhowell followed, then the serious business of choosing a cake at the cafe, and next a visit to the outdoor shop where we met Shirley, Eileen, Tom, Ron and Laurie. They got their priorities wrong because the the cafe had shut by the time that they got there. Personally, I don't believe the report that Laurie kicked the door in frustration. (CERTAINLY NOT! I can vouch for the fact that he enjoyed excellent tea and toasted tea-cake in a suitably sedate manner in the hotel down the road. Ed.)

The next and final stop was the Danywenallt Centre. Not having been before I wasn't sure what to expect, but found the accommodation good and the staff very friendly and helpful. They have plans for further improving the Centre this year and building is probably already under way. The food was enjoyable, the only complaint from the "old hands" being that there was no porridge for breakfast this year.

There were 21 of us in total, some turning up later in the evening, but in time for the meal. After dinner on both evenings the party split into two groups; one consisting of those who wanted nothing more than to have a read round the fire or a quiet game of dominoes and the "drinkers", who tramped a mile or so down the footpath to Talybont to sample the wide variety of bitters on sale (although they were joined by a secret lager drinker).

On Saturday morning everyone was ready for a day on the hills, but the wind had really got up overnight and promised to be 'interesting'. The 'hard' party set off by minibus to the top of the valley, to be followed by those of us who had chickened out of a really testing day. Arriving in time to see them disappearing over the brow of Craig y Fan Ddu on to the ridge, we then followed them up the hill. The climb would have been testing enough in normal conditions, but became a real battle in the wind, although it got behind us in the last twenty yards and blew us on to the top like debris from an overturned rubbish bin.

After a general consultation, huddled behind a peat grough, it was unanimously agreed that we should not try to battle on, but retrace our steps. To return into the wind was easier said than done, but at least it was a relief that we didn't have the wind behind us blowing us over the edge and down the hill. We then had a more sedate walk down the valley to the Centre where some stayed and others had another short walk or, in Pam's case, a run.

The 'hard' walkers came back with horrendous tales of their walk (stagger?) along the ridge. They had completed the full route so it can be regarded as an honourable draw - Wind 1, Kent Group 1, although as four hats were blown away perhaps that is the equivalent of losing 4 - 0 on a penalty shoot-out.

Next day we walked as one group under Peter's leadership over the ridge to the East of the reservoir and down over farmland to the canal, which we followed to Talybont village and the Travellers' Rest, where we sat outside among the local livestock which enjoyed part of our packed lunch. After a short return to the Centre and a cup of tea some made their way home while the remainder stayed on for a further night after a good meal down at the pub.

Peter had spent a good deal of time and cost in telephone calls and correspondence because of some doubts about the availability of the Centre and we all have to thank him and the Centre staff for an excellent weekend. For a Winter break within reasonable driving time from Kent it had everything we could have wished; a fine walking area and good accommodation and food.

P.S. For those of you who did not partake of the Brecon Beacons weekend I must apologise for the inclusion of THREE reports but I just mentioned to Pete Barnett during Sunday's walk that it would be nice to have a report for the Newsletter and the rest followed. Tom S.

Dave Sheldrake has reminded me that the deadline for sending in articles for the next "STRIDER" is 1st June and that therefore details of any walks for the Group Programme should be sent to him, at [redacted], by 20th MAY AT THE LATEST.

GROUP MEETINGS are held on the first Monday of each month (except if that coincides with a Bank Holiday when they are postponed to the second Monday) at The White Hart, Brasted, nr. Westerham. Therefore the next meeting will be on Monday 10th May when, as it happens, I hope to be in the Cairngorms.

POSTSCRIPT

At some stage during the typing of this Newsletter there was a ring on our doorbell from two people in search of a place to sleep. Over a cup of tea in front of our fire it transpired that they were father and son who had walked the North Downs Way from Oxted and who, very understandably in the conditions, did not wish to pitch and sleep in the tent they were carrying. After a few 'phone calls and a couple of pints I took them to some friends who do B & B and they then thought they could find their way back to the pub for a meal later on. A few days later Jenny and I received a most appreciative letter from the father who, I had discovered, had been an LDWA member and enjoyed "Strider".

Ann Beeching's account of the Haute Route trip will be concluded in the next issue along with some other articles already 'on file' and any other (printable) delights which fellow Kent Group members send me in the meantime. Answers to Shirley's quiz, etc. by 30th June, please.

Tom Sinclair.

A WEEK_END IN WALES _ LDWA AGM 1993

Celia and I attended our seventeenth AGM this year, which was held in Conway, north wales,and which was considered by many of those there to have been one of the best yet. It was extremely good value for money at £46 per head for two nights bed and breakfast, buffet meals on Friday evening and Sunday lunch, a six course dinner on the Saturday evening, a packed lunch on Saturday and plenty of teas and coffees in between. It was held at the Holiday Fellowship centre which is just above the town of Conway.

We travelled up a day early and had a good walk on the Friday, following one of the routes in Frank Duerden's book Great Walks in North Wales, over the Eastern Carneddau. It touched part of the early section of the Snowden 100 route. Friday evening was spent meeting old friends over a few drinks in the bar.

Walks of 20 and 10 miles had been arranged for Saturday, with a tour of the historic sites in the town for a few. A coach which had been arranged for those on the longer walk dropped us on the A55 coast road near Aber. Then a climb, gradually at first, then zig-zagging up alongside Aber falls, followed a long slog up over featureless ground to reach the refuge hut at Foel Grach (3195 ft). There was no respite on the climb, but at least when we reached the hut we knew that apart from a couple of sharp but short climbs, for the rest of the day we would be gradually dropping downhill on a long ridge back to Conway. It had all the ingrediants required for an excellent walk including almost perfect weather and great views of the surrounding hills. In the evening we all enjoyed the annual dinner followed by a lively barn dance, called by Ken Falconer, in which nearly all participated.

The Annual General Meeting of the association was held on the Sunday morning. This covered reports from the various officeholders of their activities during the past year, then the election of officers and committee members. For various reasons Peter Dyson, Ken Falconer, Kevin Uzzell, and Derek Esmond were not offering themselves for re-election and Bernie Pearson was standing down as Secretary, but was elected as a committee member. There was no nomination for Membership Secretary and so, with his agreement, Kevin Uzzell was co-opted to the committee and will continue to hold the post until a suitable encumbent can be found.

There was a constitutional amendment to enable the LDWA to appoint trustees to hold prtoperty on its behalf. The immediate requirement is that they be appointed to hold shares in Long Distance Paths Advisory Service Ltd., a company formed by the association. Peter Robins, who had been appointed manager of LDPAS Ltd., was introduced and explained the work of the company during the past year and some future aims. He is particularly keen that local groups should keep him informed as to whether routes listed in the "Handbook" and which fall into that group's area, are being "maintained" and should continue to be listed.

Finally, there was some discussion, as might be expected, of the implications arising from the over-subscription to this year's '100' event. Geoff Saunders prompted the discussion by suggesting possibilities for the future, the main one being upgrading the marshal's walk into virtually a full event. As might be expected, this did not meet full approvsl, paricularly from those involved in organising rather than walking events, but several interesting suggestions were made from the floor. One was that the 10 x 100 badge be scrapped as it only encouraged walkers to keep doing events, another that after doing two events walkers should be barred (or perhaps have lowest priority) until they have marshalled on an event. Another was that the canal '100's organised by Frank Hodson be given full status. It was finally agreed that members should be circulated for their views through 'Strider'.

After a buffet lunch we all dispersed having enjoyed a good week-end.