

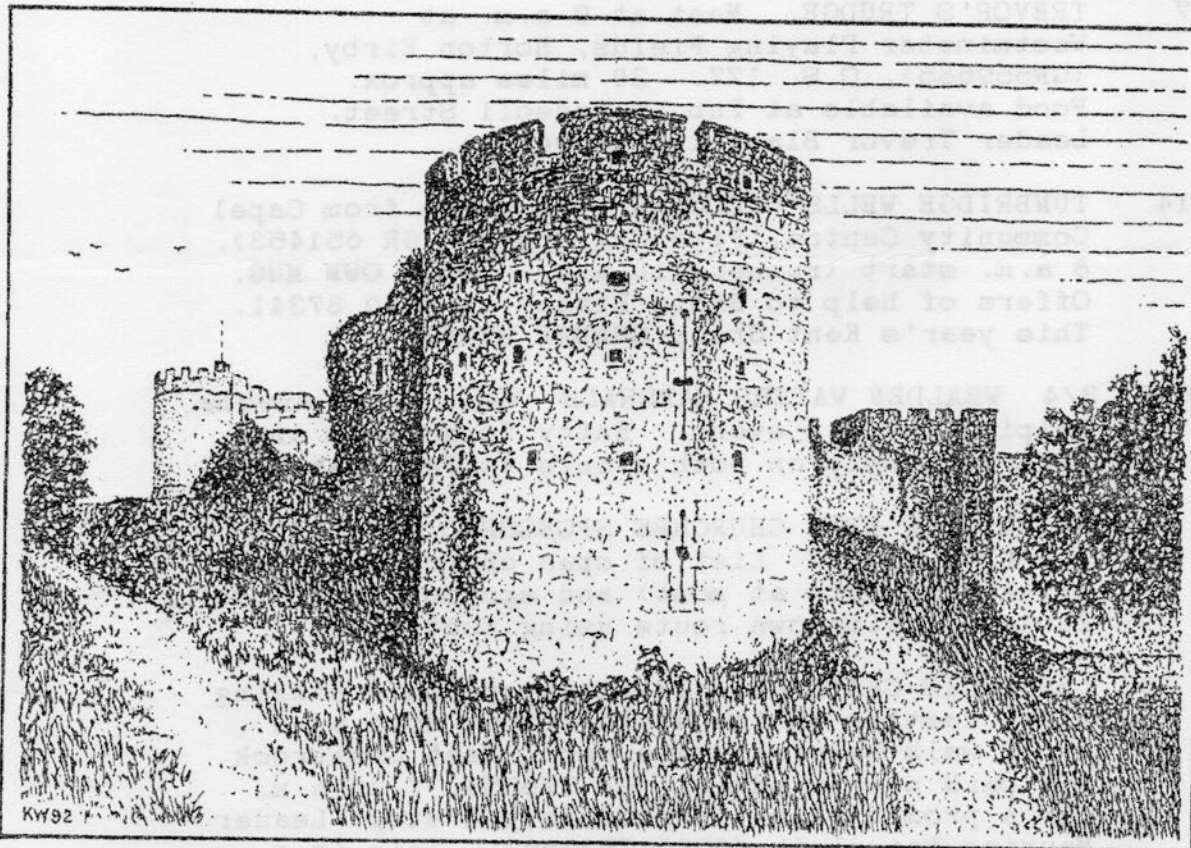


LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION

Kent Group

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

NEWSLETTER



Salewood Castle

NUMBER 34

AUGUST 1994

COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN.....RON ROWETH
TREASURER.....ALAN BALL
SECRETARY.....DAVID SHELDRAKE

MEMBERS

ANN BEECHING ANDREW BOULDEN
BRIAN BUTTIFANT MAURICE FAIRCLOTH
PAUL HATCHER KEVIN PUTTOCK
TOM SINCLAIR (Newsletter Editor).

KENT GROUP PROGRAMME AUGUST TO DECEMBER 1994

- SUN AUG 7 TREVOR'S TRUDGE. Meet at 9 a.m. at Westminster Playing Fields, Horton Kirby, (GR559685), O.S. 177. 20 miles approx. Food available at Pub in Hodsoll Street. Leader Trevor Blake
- SUN AUG 14 TUNBRIDGE WELLS CIRCULAR. 30 miles from Capel Community Centre, Five Oak Green, (GR 651453). 8 a.m. start (runners 10 a.m.) **BRING OWN MUG.** Offers of help to Ernie Bishop on This year's Kent Group **SUMMER EVENT.**
- SAT/SUN SEPT 3/4 WEALDEN WATERS MARSHALS' WALK. For anyone helping on main event. Entry forms from and offers of help on both events to Paul Hatcher.
- SAT SEPT 10 FRIENDS OF KENT CHURCHES SPONSORED BIKE RIDE Non-LDWA event. List of open churches (free drinks and eats at most) and sponsor form from Editor. Devise own route using footpaths.
- SUN SEPT 18 LES TROIS CHATEAUX. 33 miles approx. Linking three castles in the Weald, first done as a group walk several years ago. Meet Cranbrook car park near windmill, GR 776359, 7.30 a.m. for a prompt start. Possible pub stop. Leader Maurice Faircloth. This is a long **unsupported** walk and those taking part should be capable of completing the distance.
- SAT/SUN OCT 9/10 WEALDEN WATERS WALK - contact Paul Hatcher to find out how **YOU** can help.
- SUN NOV 13 ANOTHER FIVE POINTED STAR. Meet 8.45 a.m. Western Road C.P., Borough Green, GR607573. 18 miles approx. Food available at pub. Leader Tom Sinclair

SUN DEC 4 ANNUAL FAMILY LUNCH AND WALK. Short morning walk then sit down meal at Weald of Kent Golf Club near Headcorn. Contact Andrew Boulden.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

First Monday of each month (unless that is a Bank Holiday when it is postponed to the second Monday) at 'The Provender', Pye Corner, Ulcombe, GR853486, 8 p.m. onwards.

Dear Fellow Kent Group Members,

The castle shown on the cover is not one of Maurice's Trois Chateaux, mentioned above, but it sets the tone for this issue. Groombridge Place, not quite a castle, was the venue for the official opening of the High Weald Walk on 27th June attended by Ernie Bishop, Brian Buttifant and myself as stand-in for Laurie Lowe. Contacts were renewed and established with members of the High Weald Project Team, Public Rights of Way Officers etc., speeches were heard and we were given an excellent buffet lunch and a copy of the well-written, illustrated Guide Book. This is available from KCC Planning Dept., Springfield, Maidstone, ME14 2LX, price £2.95, post free, and contains a dedication to the memory of Mike Smith, who originally devised the route as the Tunbridge Wells Circular. After lunch we were taken on a short, slowish, but very informative walk along part of the route visiting Harrison Rocks where we encountered a cultured Victorian young lady who spoke of Mr. Harrison. Other historical figures included a railway engineer (twice), a tea smuggler and an excise-man.

It seems appropriate that our next programme (see above) includes the revived Tunbridge Wells Circular on 14th August. If you have not already entered or offered help please contact Ernie Bishop on [REDACTED] ALSO please contact Paul Hatcher on [REDACTED] with offers of help on the Wealden Waters, Marshals' Walk or main event, 3/4 September or 9/10 October.

Talking of help we have been asked to run a checkpoint on the 1995 Shropshire Hundred so whether you wish to do the Marshals' Walk or not please 'phone Ron Roweth [REDACTED] with offers to serve food, punch cards, etc.

Hearty congratulations to all those who completed AND those who very nearly completed the Dartmoor Hundred. Thanks to those who helped on the Kent Group checkpoint, have been received from Hazel Bound and Sally Dyer of the Cornwall and Devon Group. Tom S.

Now for something from someone else.....

NEW SOCIAL SECRETARY

As briefly mentioned in the last newsletter I have taken over from Trevor Blake as Social Secretary. By way of a little background I have been with the group for approximately three years. Previously I was a rather shy and quiet individual until that fateful day of the 1992 Gatliff when someone asked if I would like to walk with them. It was only when I was half way round the route that I realised that the person making the request had been Peter Barnett. My life has never been the same since!

Whilst my main responsibility will be the organisation of the annual family lunch and walk I would welcome ideas for other events/social gatherings that may be possible to organise. Andrew Boulden.

NEW GROUP SWEATSHIRT?

It was suggested at a recent committee meeting that the group's membership might like to put forward their ideas for a new logo design and/or colour for the group sweatshirt.

Designs featuring a Kentish theme will be most favourably received but please let your imagination/artistic talent run free. All ideas to me, or any other committee member before the end of August, please. Kevin Puttock.

Kevin is not offering a prize for the 'winning' design. Ed.

Mentioning prizes Shirley Higgins was the only one to send in the answers, to 'A Different Kind of Challenge'. They were all correct and were as follows:-

1. Salisbury Plain Hundred K;
2. Belvoir Forty;
3. Duddon Landscape Challenge;
4. Purbeck Flod;
5. Mid Wales Mountain Challenge;
6. Lyke Wake Walk;
7. Spring in Lakeland;
8. Smugglers' Trod;
9. Maidstone Circular;
10. Essex Twelve Hours;
11. Charnwood Forest Marathon;
12. Mallerstang Yomp;
13. Shotley Peninsula Challenge;
14. Blubberhouses Moor;
15. Rottingdean Windmill Walk;
16. Dartmoor Hundred;
17. Anglian Heights Challenge;
18. Cleveland Hundred;
19. Durham Dales Challenge;
20. The Bilsdale Circuit;
21. Saints and Scholars;
22. Sidmouth Saunter.

The prize may, depending on the availability of donor and recipient, be presented at the September pub meeting. Shirley also pointed out to me that an 'e' was missing from no. 19 - 'Ale Mangled Churls Head' it should have been. Apologies to any baffled solvers and to anyone who suffered from a surfeit of anagrams - there will be fewer next time!

Others have drawn my attention to the fact that I got my Ivans confused in the last issue. I have since grovelled to them both. It was good to see the Verralls, in their new, Devon, home territory, when they drove over to help on our checkpoint at the Village Hall, Wonson. Raynet were already there when I arrived and let them in and not much later Susan and I were playing Badminton of sorts while waiting for the milk to arrive for much-needed tea. We had begun to set out tables and chairs when Ron and Ann arrived soon to be followed by the provisions and members of the first shift team, including the author of the next piece.

DARTMOOR HUNDRED, THE KENT GROUP CHECKPOINT - FIRST SHIFT

We, arrived at Throwleigh Village Hall, Wonson, the Kent Checkpoint, at about 6.30 p.m. on Saturday evening. Tom Sinclair and a few others had arrived earlier to open up and everyone got down to the job of unloading provisions and setting everything up for the 8.15 p.m. opening time. The Hall, situated about 2½ miles north west of Chagford, is in fact a converted war-time cinema and apart from the spacious main hall and stage, included a kitchen and a separate room where Raynet had established themselves. Having prepared everything the marshals took turns to visit the 'Northmore Arms', the local hostelry for a bite to eat and drink. (Yes, the drink had a bite to it, it was Adnam's Strong Brew. Ed.)

The first walkers/runners arrived at about 8.45 p.m. These two had been held back earlier on, as they had been arriving almost half-an-hour before some checkpoints opened. After this there was a gap of almost 1½ hours before the next group appeared and walkers continued to trickle through slowly for the next few hours.

The menu, which consisted of fruit and rice, a selection of sandwiches, quiche, pasta salad and hot and cold drinks, seemed to be quite popular, although a few marshals looked somewhat dubiously at the pasta salad.

At about one o'clock we encountered the first major rush when about thirty or so walkers checked in within ten minutes. However those catering managed to cope and there was always enough space and seating in the hall.

The first Kent member to pass through was Don Newman who was going very well at this stage. The conditions on Saturday had been dry with a fresh wind although people were reporting some very muddy sections along the route.

With reports from Raynet and those visiting the checkpoint, we were kept updated with details of retirements at previous checkpoints. More large groups descended on the hall in the early hours, some of whom had grouped up where walkers had lost direction on the open moor. At around 3.30 a.m. we handed over to an eagerly awaiting second shift.

David Sheldrake.

CHECKPOINT 7 - DARTMOOR 100 (2nd Shift)

Having safely negotiated the narrow, winding lanes to Wonson Village Hall, we arrived for the second shift at about 3 a.m. ready for a 3.30 take-over. We were greeted by Ron who said "Have you brought some pound coins?". Having read the checkpoint details we had been diligently collecting pound coins for the electricity ever since. Our pockets and handbags (the ladies', not Bryan's!) were overflowing with the things and we smugly answered in the affirmative. "Well, we don't need them!" He told us gleefully, "The electricity is metered!" which is why all the Places of Interest in South Devon were paid in pound coins for the rest of the week! A good start we thought and began to slide into the various tasks.

The rest of the night passed busily as walkers came and went in various stages of exhaustion. There was a period of panic as we ran out of sandwiches and cakes and were left with only cold rice and fruit and a few other bits. Messages were relayed and relief came, albeit too late for many of the walkers, in the form of trays of cakes and loaves of bread.

Dawn from the kitchen window was spectacular. White trails of mist rested in the valleys and the sun rose over the distant hills. Near at hand sheep and lambs were feeding. It made a welcome respite from the sight of a sink of dishes.

Due to finish at 11.15 we were pleased to be able to be cleared up by 10.30 and we all dispersed tired but happy to our various lodgings.

Pat and Bryan

PROGRAMME OF WALKS - JANUARY TO APRIL 1995

So far this year there have been plenty of offers from people willing to lead walks for the group and this has been reflected in the current programme with a total of seven walks, all of which have been well attended. However during the winter we usually receive fewer offers for walks probably because of weather and shorter daylight hours.

If anybody is able to provide a walk during the period January to April next year please let me know either in writing or by 'phone. Full details must be sent to me by 19th September at the latest in order that the programme may be included in 'Strider'.

David Sheldrake.

THE NAMING OF STEER'S FIELD

On 26th June a group of LDWA members gathered on National Trust land on the North Downs at Ranmore in Surrey for the naming of Steer's Field (GR 142 504 OS Landranger 187).

The setting on this bright sunny morning, with views of Leith Hill and the distant South Downs, seemed a fitting place to dedicate a memorial to our late president, Chris Steer (LDWA 1), who lived and walked for most of his life in the county.

Our new chairman, Bernie Pearson, introduced the speeches, first from a National Trust representative and then from our vice-president, Barbara Blatchford, who spoke warmly of Chris's meeting with her late husband Alan, from which our association was formed. Being a co-founder of the LDWA is indeed an achievement in life but I feel the greatest contribution is the highly successful Strider and that format lives on for all members to enjoy.

After the unveiling a picnic was on the programme which seemed appropriate as historically this field was known locally as 'the picnic field'.

After a relaxed lunch a short walk was arranged to commemorate the founders by walking from Steer's Field to Blatchford Down and back. Tony Youngs was the chosen leader which again was very appropriate as Chris and Tony were great walking companions, often to be seen on events.

At one stage we had pointed out to us an old bus shelter which had been totally hidden by vegetation and which will be restored to be used as a walkers' shelter - a nice idea.

Brian B.

THE FOOTPATH

About three years ago while walking in Ide Hill I left Emmetts grounds heading for the Ide Hill to Brasted road and found that the exit from the field had been blocked.

The farmer, whose field this is, had cleared an oak tree that had blown down and dropped the root on to the exit gate and then piled the limbs and 'topping' over the steps leading down to the road - knowing full well that this was a public right of way.

I photographed the steps and the stone footpath marker and sent a copy to our Liaison Officer asking him to do something about it, like, for example, getting in touch with the powers that be on the Sevenoaks Council. The outcome was that it was nothing to do with the Sevenoaks Council and the tree stump and its accompaniments were left in place.

The Footpath, continued.

In the meantime whoever walked this footpath turned right at the obstruction, walked down the field for 20 metres and scrambled through the hedge and down the bank into the road: a very dangerous practice but it kept the footpath open although a trespass was being committed.

The obstruction remained there until the beginning of June 1994 when I am pleased to say that after three years and many letters to the Sevenoaks Council, the Kent County Council and the Ramblers' Association the obstruction was removed, also the smashed up gate.

A new set of steps has been put in and a new footpath signpost and I am pleased to see that whoever carried out all the work has left the old stone footpath marker in place.

If you should be in this area, go and enjoy the ease of access to this footpath and remember: no matter how big or small the farmer is, if he obstructs our footpaths do something about it and keep on doing something until you get it cleared.

John Probert 524.

THE HERTFORDSHIRE HOBBLE 1994

The weather was a repeat of last year with tropical temperatures and high humidity, under a blazing sun! As we mopped our dripping brows we pitied those, clutching cool drinks, who had chosen to drift off to sleep watching the Men's Tennis Final on TV. However, we enjoyed ourselves as it was an excellent route and a friendly marshal appeared now and then along the route to check progress and take photographs. The checkpoint at Kimpton was particularly attractive: chairs were set out in the shade of trees outside the church hall on the picturesque village green.

Farts of the route passed through deserted countryside - those people who weren't watching TV were no doubt getting hot in traffic jams attempting to get to the coast where they could cool off. Sometimes we were alone in the quiet and blissful shade of lovely woodlands and once it was a surprise to come upon tree fellers seemingly miles from anywhere (I only saw two though, I wonder where the other feller was!!).

Only one other Kent Group member seemed to be around and Wheathampstead is only half an hour by road from the Dartford river Crossing!

We feasted on an attractive salad followed by strawberries and cream at the finish. It was a splendid and to a fine, but hot, day.

Bryan C.

CHRISTMAS DINNER/FAMILY LUNCH/ANNUAL BLOW-OUT

Sunday 4th December 1994

This year will see a new venue on the eastern side of the county. The Weald of Kent Golf Club just out side Headcorn offers excellent facilities including ample parking.

The day will commence with a 5/6 mile walk from the Golf Club at 10.00 a.m. On returning at 1.00 p.m. (approx.) showers will be available. We will have exclusive use of our own Bar. Carvery lunch (vegetarian meal also available) to commence between 2.00 and 2.30 p.m. Cost: £13 per head; Children under 12: half price; under fives free.

Contact Andrew Boulden on [REDACTED] for more details and send your cheque ("LDWA Kent Group") to: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] by November 30 latest. Andrew will need to know: your name and 'phone number number attending walk and meal, number attending meal only, number of vegetarian meals needed for adults (if any) number of children under 12 attending meal (if any) number of children needing vegetarian meals (if any) number of children under 5 (if any).

GROUP WALKS

As Dave Sheldrake has already mentioned all the walks in the April to July programme have been well-supported with numbers ranging from 15 to 28 and this is encouraging for those who have spent time planning and checking routes and finding suitable pubs; often the latter precedes the former!

It would be even more encouraging if others had sent in glowing reports for publication in the Newsletter but perhaps 'they' have been waiting to be asked. Please don't!

Some memories of the walks:

April showers of snow and sleet on Shirley's Stileish Stomp;
Penumbral undulations at the end of Dave's evening walk;
Equal numbers of men and women on Paul's evening walk;
Finding Mike already at the pub on Bryan's Shoreham Shuffle;
On Paul's 'Cream Teas' walk (better than ever) numbers reducing by one after the morning drinks stop through the loss of a member renowned for craftsmanship and survival who, on returning to Pluckley two hours early, needed large and equal quantities of tea, scones, jam, cream, cakes and Mary's charm to mollify him. Tom S.

CROSSWORDS ETC. None this month but a prize for the best caption for the illustration on the back page. Tom S.

LES TROIS CHATEAUX

You will see from the programme of events that I am leading a walk (with Dave, in case he thinks I've forgotten) that visits the three castles of the High Weald. The walk is something out of the ordinary for a social event and I thought that a few words of explanation, if not justification, might be worthwhile.

Why are we doing it? There are three main reasons:

1 Many of you will remember that Mike Smith devised and led two walks in the mid 80s connecting Scotney, Bodiam and Sissinghurst. I was on the first of them along with a few currently still active members (no names to spare the innocent) on a bitterly cold May day. I know that he repeated the walk later on when conditions were hot and sunny.

Dave and I had been thinking for some time that the walk should be revived as a tribute to Mike's considerable contribution to the activities of the group over many years. It is an indication of the naturalness of the route that, after walking it out from scratch myself, I discovered that the highlighted paths on Mike's map were much the same as mine.

2 'Les Trois Chateaux' is not just an affectation on my part. It avoids confusion with 'The Three Castles' walk between Winchester and Windsor but, more important, highlights the strong links between Kent (and particularly these castles) and France, past and present.

Both Bodiam and Scotney castles were built in the 14th century to keep the French out and seem to have worked well. Sissinghurst was used during the Napoleonic wars to imprison French soldiers. Incidentally, The Three Chimneys pub close by is so named because when the French were let out for their pint each evening they walked to the pub at Les Trois Chemins (the three ways) and hence the obvious corruption. Others have suggested that the name is derived from the fact that the pub has got three chimneys; difficult to take this explanation seriously, I think.

Today, we have Le Tour, Le Tunnel and, equally important, Le Kent Group's first tentative exploration of walking links outre manche. (See Ernie's note.) By the way, the first person to tell me that Bodiam is not in Kent will not receive a prize.

3 It is a first class walk. It includes not only the castles but also the forests of Bedgebury and Hemsted, the rivers Rother and Teise and passes through or close by several fine High Weald villages: Cranbrook, Goudhurst, Lamberhurst, Hawkhurst, Benenden and Sissinghurst. Best of all, is the magnificent tranquility of the rolling High Weald countryside where main roads are left far behind.

It is a long walk and should not be undertaken lightly. However, those prepared to take up the challenge will be rewarded with, yes, aching limbs, but also a feast of some of the best walking of its type in this country and, for all I know, in France as well.

A BIENTOT ET BONNE CHANCE!

Maurice Faircloth

LONDON to PARIS

In 1992 Brian Buttifant and I became involved in discussions with Steve Gilbert of K.C.C. (Countryside Manager, North downs Way) regarding the possibility of an event around the N.D.W. loop. That fell through, mainly because of doubts about financial viability.

K.C.C. was keen to promote the N.D.W., having made efforts to upgrade the quality of the route by footpath and stile improvement, waymarking etc. So, soon after the original discussions, we were also involved in talks about the possibility of a London to Paris route. The original timetable seemed quite unrealistic and some of the ideas pretentious and we were not surprised to hear no more about it.

Then, out of the blue, we both received an invitation to attend an inaugural ceremony for a London to Paris route on Farthing Down, near Folkestone on Friday, 17th June. They have devised a route which via the Thames Path, Green Chain Walk, Shuttle Riverway, Cray Riverway, Darent Valley Path and N.D.W. links with various G.R. (Grande Randonnee) paths to the outskirts of Paris, a total of 690 miles. The route is not waymarked and is merely a recommended route.

The inaugural ceremony was held on the N.D.W. with short speeches (and some not so short) from the Chairman of K.C.C. a representative of the Countryside Commission and their French equivalents from over the Channel. There was a sizeable audience, made up of various local government officials from Kent and Surrey, N.D.W. volunteers and odd assorted hangers-on, like me. The L.D.W.A. was represented by Ann Sayer, Peter Robins, L.D.P.A.S. Manager was there, as was Barbara Blitchford in her role of Footpaths Manager (?) for Surrey. Arthur Howcroft, British representative on the Committee of European Ramblers Assn., and who is known to some of us, was also present. A sizeable group, no doubt of similar mix, attended from France. The whole thing was backed up by a large herd of Friesians which took a close interest, with the result that the order of the day was "eyes down" to avoid putting one's foot in it.

After the speeches we moved off for a short walk (about two miles) to Postling village hall where we were regaled with a buffet lunch at Kent ratepayers' expense.

Walks had been planned for the Saturday and Sunday and so, joined now by Maurice Faircloth, we arrived bright and early on the Saturday at Dover Eastern Docks to meet a large contingent of French walkers. They were led by two carrying a large banner proclaiming who they were, but saved our embarrassment by folding that before we actually walked. Three coaches had been laid on for the long walk (20K), which then transported us to Etchinghill to join the N.D.W. and walk back to Dover. Two shorter walks had been arranged as well; one in the Wye area and one from Walmer to Dover.

The impact of three coachloads of walkers on the first stile can be appreciated. That and the first steep climb up onto the Downs soon strung everyone out. The three Kent Group members acted as sweepers and so we had an opportunity to study the less fit members of the French walking fraternity. Apart from a near international incident when the midway pub ran out of coffee, the walk passed off pleasantly and was certainly a complete change from group "eye-balls out" tactics.

Sunday meant an even earlier start to catch the ferry to France for walks in the Calais area. After landing, it started with an element of farce because the two coaches, intended to take us to the main welcoming party at the Eurotunnel Centre, were not there to meet us having gone to the wrong place. This resulted in the contact person rushing round the parking area waving his arms in the air at any passing coach.

In due course we made contact with the main party and had a good walk, which made the best use of an area which would not be described as ideal walking country. At the end, the LDWA members present, with the choice of waiting for a coach or a fast walk back to the Centre, chose the latter in the true tradition of those whose strength is in the legs rather than the head.

It was an enjoyable week-end, but I must say that the short experience of walking in the Pas de Calais has not left me eager to walk to Paris.

Ernie Bishop.

