



LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION

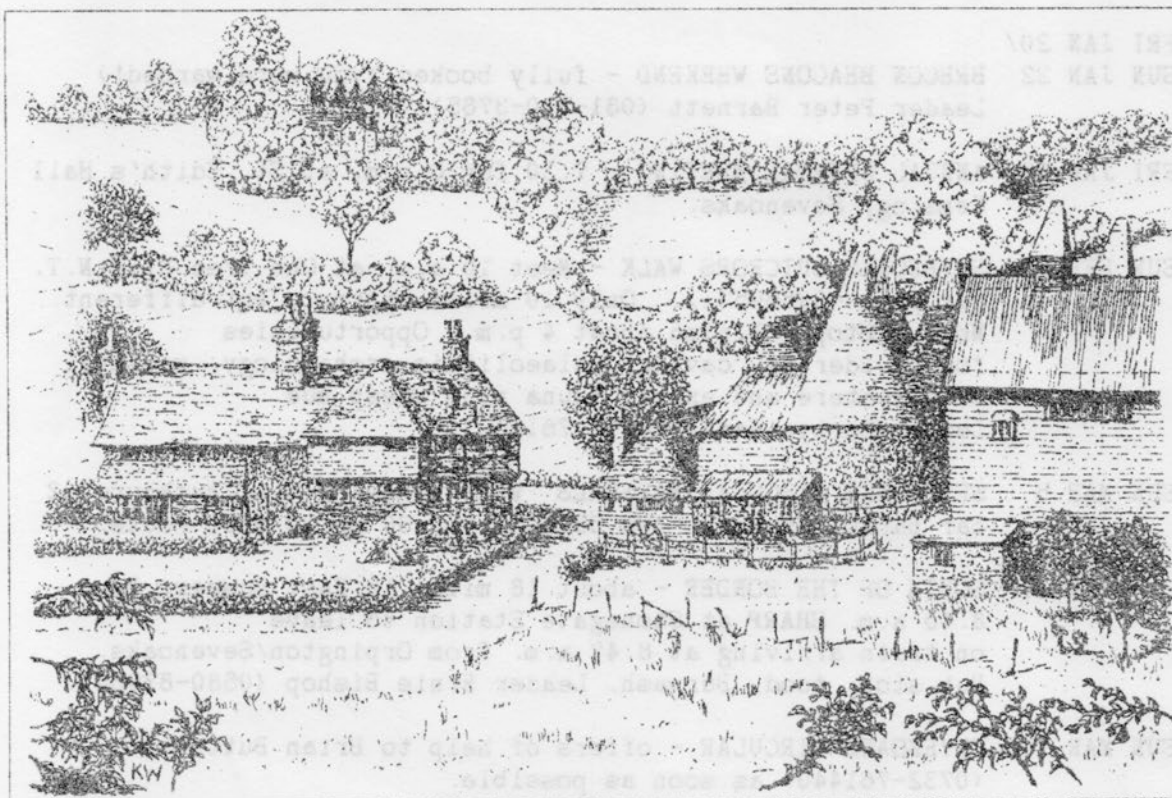
Kent Group

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

NEWSLETTER

KENT GROUP PROGRAMME JANUARY TO APRIL 1995

FRI JAN 6 NORTH POLE WALK - 20 miles of the North Pole
Meet 9.30 for 10.30 a.m. start at the North Pole pub near
Vatnagar (08 697547). Leader: Ivan Wagner (0733 833000).



SUN APR 23 HARTSTON WALK - 20 miles approx. Meet 8.30 a.m. at
Hartston Station (08 666212). Pub stop at Newham.
Food available. Leader: Shirley Higgins (0832 815441).

MONTHLY MEETINGS are held on the first Monday of each month (except 1.
that coincides with a bank holiday when they are postponed to the second
Monday of the month). For further details, contact the Group Secretary.

NUMBER 35

DECEMBER 1994

COMMITTEE

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

MEMBERS

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

KENT GROUP PROGRAMME JANUARY TO APRIL 1995

- FRI JAN 6 NORTH POLE NIGHT WALK - 20 miles of the Medway Horseshoe
Meet 9.30 for 10.30 p.m. start at the 'North Pole' pub near
Wateringbury (GR 697547). Leader Ivan Waghorn
- FRI JAN 20/
- SUN JAN 22 BRECON BEACONS WEEKEND - fully booked (you were warned!)
Leader Peter Barnett
- FRI JAN 27 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 7.30 for 8 p.m. at St. Edith's Hall
Kemsing, Sevenoaks.
- SUN FEB 26 SEVENOAKS OUTCROPS WALK - Meet 10 a.m. at One Tree Hill N.T.
car park (GR559531). Only 10 miles approx., but different.
No Pub Stop. Finish about 4 p.m. Opportunities
for bouldering, caving, palaeolithic archaeology, medieval
architecture and exotic fauna plus steep mud.
Leader Martyn Berry
- SUN MAR 5 SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR MARSHALS' WALK - Meet 8 a.m. Buckhurst 2
car park, Sevenoaks (GR 534547) for 30 or 20 mile route.
- SAT MAR 11 SOUTH OF THE BORDER - about 18 miles in East Sussex. Meet
8.45 a.m. SHARP at Stonegate Station to leave
on train arriving at 8.47 a.m. from Orpington/Sevenoaks.
Pub stop, food, Burwash. Leader Ernie Bishop
- SUN MAR 19 SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR - offers of help to Brian Buttifant
as soon as possible.
- SUN APR 23 HARRIETSHAM HOP - 20 miles approx. Meet 8.30 a.m. at
Harrietsham Station (GR 666529). Pub stop at Newnham.
Food available. Leader Shirley Higgins

MONTHLY 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 Provender, Fye Corner, Ulcombe, from 8 o'clock onwards.

Dear Fellow Kent Group Members,

As I walked into the garden of 'The Green Man', Hodsoll Street, on the 1st Sunday in August the chorus of "Hello, Tom, where have you come from?" told me that there had been a good turn out for Trevor's Trudge which I was joining at the lunch stop. Trevor had set a smart pace in the morning, I was told, but if the route was as good as the afternoon's there must have been splendid views as they sped along.

The second Sunday saw 100 starters on the first Summer High Weald Walk - otherwise known as the recycled Tunbridge Wells Circular - which Ernie Bishop organised, with a little help from friends in the group, and managed to make a small profit which is very encouraging for an event which had been missing from the LDWA calendar for a few years. A good event, well-worth reviving, but the temperatures were a bit too high for my liking a fortnight earlier on the Marshals' Walk: that and a very "extended" 30 miles must, I suspect, account for slower than usual times by many.

The next group event was the Wealden Waters Marshals' Walk in early September which included a first-time finisher (not lop-sided I am reliably told) whose article appears later.

Merci mille fois, Maurice, mon vieux, pour 'Les Trois Chateaux'. Shirley a écrit quelques mots lyriques la dessus qui tu trouverai la dessous. (Thanks for the walk, Maurice, see Shirley's lyrical piece about it later).

SHROPSHIRE HUNDRED 27, 28 and 29 May 1995

We have now heard that our checkpoint is to be at 68 miles, is near Craven Arms and will be open from 2 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Sunday 28 May. Offers of help, please, to Ron Roweth on [REDACTED] giving your preference for 1st or 2nd shift. Still on 'hundreds' the idea of Kent Group running an event, based on Canterbury, in the year 2000 is being talked about.

As usual at this time of year Brian Buttifant is on the look-out for volunteers to staff checkpoints, etc. on the Sevenoaks Circular on Sunday 19th March, 1994. Why not 'phone him first and you might be given the job you want?

The possibility of a 'hundred' in Kent in 2000 will be on the agenda for discussion at the A.G.M. so do try and come along to Kemsing on Friday 27th January 1995 and hear all about it. It is also your opportunity to elect the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer and other members of the Committee and papers about that are enclosed. Also on the agenda will be an item about the format of future AGMs. That is quite enough from me for now so please turn over (the page!) for a piece which somehow got missed last time.

EVENING WALK FROM STALISFIELD GREEN

Leader: Paul Hatcher - 7/7/94

A mixed group of members, spouses and friends turned up on a beautiful evening and enjoyed a walk and chat through our green and pleasant Kent countryside. The leisurely pace speeded up considerably near the end of the walk when certain people sighted 'The Plough', especially those not lucky enough to have eaten before the walk. (The kitchen closed at 9.30 p.m. !)

Thanks to Mary and Paul's careful route planning the walk went smoothly with, as far as we know, no wide diversions. We understand they did the getting lost bit themselves in the planning stage, ending up like Hansel and Gretel walking in a circle, finding their way back to their car as darkness fell!

All thanked Mary and Paul for a very pleasant evening.

Pat and Bryan C.

(My apologies to Pat, Mary, Bryan and Paul for the oversight, it was a very good walk. Tom S.)

"MARSHALS' MARSHALS"

Having just completed my first 62 mile (100k) challenge walk (Wealden Waters Marshals' event) I would like to thank all the Marshals' Marshals for the terrific back-up and encouragement received during the event. I realized by the time I reached the third checkpoint that the sustaining goodies packed in my haversack* were quite unnecessary and I was more than happy to reduce the weight on my back. I enjoyed the walk and the companionship from fellow walkers and was very pleased to have finished within the time limit.

Since joining the LDWA some twenty months ago I have been amazed at the amount of work involved in organising these events and very much appreciate the unbelievably unselfish help given to us especially through the night when the weather was rather miserable.

Jean Dunton.

(*A good word, Jean, did your goodies contain oats? Ed.)

WALKING IN BRITAIN BY JOHN HILLABY

John Probert tells me that he has two copies of John Hillaby's book, both in good condition. He is willing to let one of them go to a Kent Group member for much less than the original selling price of £19.50. Offers to John, please, on [REDACTED]

THE RAMSBOTTOM ROUND

A 20 mile anytime walk devised by Derek Magnall (LDWA)

On a weekend visit to friends in Bolton I was picked up by Joe Coyle around eight on Saturday morning and taken to the car park at Ramsbottom Railway Station where we met Peter Worthington, another East Lancs Group member. The East Lancashire Railway has been restored and reclaimed by enthusiastic amateurs and attracts many tourists, especially on days of steam. However, at 8.30am, there were few people about.

We set off almost immediately for a fine walk on a day of showers and a little sunshine. The route took us through the pleasant Nuttall Park (which has a turf maze) in Ramsbottom, over two main roads and then gradually passed through farm land, passing the ruins of Grants Tower and Fletcher Bank Quarry, to go over Harden Moor (very wet everywhere) to reach Owd Betts PH on the A680 Rochdale road. We set off up Knowl Hill and then across more moorland in rain and hail, passing reservoirs and streams galore. We had our lunch break at Waughs Well on Foe Edge (it had stopped raining) where there were fine views across the reservoir. Then down to Edenfield to cross the main roads again at about the halfway mark.

The route then crossed the East Lancs Railway at Irwell Vale Station. At the station picnic area there is a table donated by the East Lancs Group, who are among many local organisations who have helped the Railway Preservation Society set up this railway. We then continued to Helmsshore and took to the moors again, With Bull Hill over on our right we passed the Helen Strange marker stone showing the spot where she was murdered. Later we passed the Pilgrim Cross where travellers rested on their way across Holcombe Moor. A cross is known to have been situated here since the 11th century. Some distance on across the moor a lashing rain storm struck as we were having a drink break, luckily we were sheltered in the lee of Peel Tower. Peel Tower was built to commemorate Sir Robert Peel who gave the names of Bobbies and Peelers to the police force he set up. This rain soon cleared up and for the rest of the walk it was dry with a few outbreaks of sunshine. Dropping down off the moor we passed the TV programme Krypton Factor establishment and eventually came to Holcombe Brook on the A676. The last couple of miles back to Ramsbottom passed very pleasantly with fine views of Summerseat and a steam train crossing the viaduct there. Cottages at Summerseat and Ramsbottom were used in the TV series "Brass". Through Nuthall Park again (resisting the temptation to try the maze) and to the now busy car park and Ramsbottom Station at around 4pm after a leisurely and fine walk in good company.

Bryan C

PS - A few days later in Grasmere, Cumbria, Pat and I were pleasantly surprised to meet and talk to Eileen and Tom Emery who were passing through on the "Coast to Coast Walk" with a YHA organised group.

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13^eme Fête Régionale de la Randonnée - Hesdin, 10-11 Septembre.

Laurie Lowe.

Maurice Faircloth, Brian Buttifant and I decided to take part in this festival in Northern France in order to sample walking in the part of France nearest to Kent, to make contact with those involved in the walking organisations of the area, and to enjoy ourselves - all three aims were achieved!

The festival was based at Hesdin, a small town about 70 kms south of Calais and the programme consisted of events of various distances for walkers, equestrians, mountain bikers and canoeists. The brochure also mentioned exhibitions of tourist information and outdoor gear products as well as craft and produce stalls. Most intriguing was the "retraite flambeaux" which was initially translated as "flaming retreat" but more accurately as a torchlit tattoo!

Maurice volunteered to do the driving and we crossed the Channel late Friday afternoon and drove to St. Omer where we found ourselves a bed and breakfast for the night before going back into the centre of the town for an evening meal. Brian "volunteered" to sleep on the folding bed (un lit pliant) as we had agreed that sharing a double bed was out of the question!

Since we needed to leave St. Omer at 6.30 (5.30 real time) it was agreed that we would have breakfast left out for us and that all we had to do was heat up the coffee. We left in darkness at 6.30 and at 7.00 were still driving around in the outskirts of St. Omer! The difficulties were caused by relying on an ancient map and the fact that many new roads had been built in the area. However, some 'creative' driving by Maurice, which paid scant regard to the way the French prefer to tackle roundabouts, one-way streets and barriers, we reached the carpark in Hesdin at 7.31 - one minute late!

We did not know what to expect but we were pleased to see a few cars in the large car park adjacent to the camping ground, and a dozen walkers were preparing for the guided 50km walk. There were also walks of shorter distances which were scheduled to start at a more civilised hour. We registered and had a coffee before setting off.

The weather was bright periods with the occasional very heavy shower as we made our way over a countryside not very different from that of SE England - a mix of chalk and clay with flints, open fields and forests. A major difference was the complete lack of stiles as the route followed permanent tracks through the fields and woods. We had been told that we must carry food and drink for a "pique-nique" and it was a pleasant surprise when we realised that it would take place in a bar! We arrived at a small village with about half the distance covered, went into a small bar and spread our food out on the tables and consumed it with the owner's full agreement - along with her beer, wine and coffee! How much more civilised the French are about such things and what a contrast to the English pub where even to eat one's own food in the beer garden without permission is unwise.

In the afternoon the group became fragmented with each of the two leaders taking different routes. We found ourselves with a guide who seemed rather unfamiliar with the local tracks and preferred road-walking to following the tracks which were evident on the map. At one point Maurice soloed one section of track to reappear smirking ahead of us at the edge of a forest. Later the rain set-in and the fragmentation increased. I finished the walk along a road section into Hesdin in the company of a young man of 'A-Team' standard. Maurice and Brian decided to do their own thing and found a slightly longer but more pleasant route through the forest and back into town.

Gradually more walkers, cyclists and horse riders arrived from their various routes and the place began to fill up. A hot meal was provided in a huge marquee and well over a thousand people were fed and watered (well, wine!) with great efficiency as darkness fell. As visitors, we were introduced to various local dignitaries by Gérard Delsaux, the president of the French walking organisation in the Pas de Calais area, and whose picture appears on the back cover of Strider 69.

Later the flaming torches were issued and we participated in the torchlight procession around the town. This was headed by a large contingent of equestrians and consequently we frequently found ourselves walking through aromatic warm piles in the road. We were escorted by large numbers of firemen who were there to ensure that we did not accidentally set light to anything or anyone. At about 11pm coaches transported us out of town to our overnight accommodation. Up until now we had not had any idea of where we would be sleeping. In fact we spent the night in a once-grand chateau which now served as an agricultural college and so had plenty of dormitory accommodation complete with very squeaky bunk beds.

We had a hasty breakfast at the chateau before boarding the coach back to Hesdin. Various events were scheduled for Sunday morning and we chose the 20km walk. This time everyone seemed to start at the same time and the throng wended its way out of town. As the different routes split off, so the numbers became less until, as on the previous day, we found ourselves walking in the company of only four or five others. Then as we neared the end of the walk, so the different routes remerged and the ranks were swelled as the multitude surged back to the campsite for another meal in the marquee.

The afternoon was devoted to an exhibition of products and services from the local area. Inside a large hall were displays by the French Ordnance Survey, regional tourist organisations, outdoor gear specialists, etc., while outside in the camping ground there were stalls selling cheeses and local honey.

After making our farewells, we headed north again, stopping briefly at Montreuil to walk around the town's huge defensive walls, before reaching Calais for the return ferry.

I thoroughly enjoyed the trip and would recommend it. The countryside is perhaps not sufficiently different from that of SE England to make the journey worthwhile for the walking alone, but if you enjoy the French way of doing things and are willing to be swept along in the enthusiasm of this type of mass event, then you will enjoy the 14th Fête Régionale de la Randonnée. One thing is certain - you will not experience anything quite like it in Britain!

CAPTION COMPETITION ENTRIES

"LDWA members make valiant attempt to extinguish bush fires caused by the spontaneous combustion of a severely dehydrated runner", Laurie.

"Well, you can't say the Kent Group checkpoint ran out of Tea, can you?" John Probert.

"Men gathering blackberries and storing them in punnets down front of shorts" Keith Warman.

Group Therapist

Shirley.

Thankyou to all four entrants who have given me problems in deciding on the winner and in selecting a suitable gift for him/her. (By the way, Shirley's prize, a bottle of Biddenden Cider, was presented to her, not very ceremonially, at the end of a Wednesday walk. Thanks also to Bryan Clarke who supplied the photograph. Bryan has sent me another photograph, purporting to come from the early annals of the Kent Group, which could be captioned "Three perambulating pantless posteriors" and which appears on a later page as does a cartoon from 'Survival'.

LES TROIS CHATEAUX

A glimpse of Scotney

In the morning

Shy and unobtrusive,

Hiding among the trees,

Secretive and unassuming,

Shunning the public gaze.

The dramatic impact of Bodiam

As we crested a hill,

A massive stone structure

Keeping its distance

Across the moat, unmoved

By the Sunday afternoon tourists

The warm brick of Sissinghurst

Spread against the evening sky,

Mellow and friendly,

Loved and cared for,

But with a whisper of ghosts

And a stirring of memories.

© Shirley Higgins.

I am sure the above lines would strike a chord with the other 10 Kent Group members and our three guests from Essex who enjoyed Maurice's 33 mile walk and an hour's half-time pub stop between 7.30 a.m. and 7.30 p.m. on 18/9/94. Whether Maurice himself enjoyed it is perhaps debatable as he was sickening for a cold at the time but he certainly made a good job of keeping us together throughout the day and there were only slight murmurs from members of the Tarmac Avoidance Society!

NEW GROUP SWEATSHIRT AND POLO SHIRT

By the time you read this you may have already seen the samples of the newly-designed sweatshirts and polo shirts on display at the Annual Lunch. Sweatshirts and polo shirts are available in green or blue and both feature a small white 'Invicta' horse with 'KENT' above and 'LDWA' below, both in gold. You will see from the enclosed order form that the price for both types of garment is £13 except for the XL size at £14. The sizes are generous. Enquiries to Kevin Puttock

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WEALDEN WATERS WALK

This year's Wealden Waters Walk saw a record number of 137 entrants, of whom 122 started and 115 finished (5 out of time). With only small changes to the route and the good weather all seemed to go well. New menus were tried and most walkers were complimentary about the food. Any other ideas please let me know!

THANKS TO ALL WHO MADE CAKE, TRIFLES ETC.

If there are any other chefs out there who would be prepared to make anything for any of next year's events, please also let me know.

This year we had 15 members start the Marshals' Walk with 13 managing to finish (I wonder what a 70% certificate would look like? Ed.). 15 Kent members started the main event of whom 14 finished.

Although we had 50+ members/friends helping on the main event we could have done with more. Some members were at the start before 7.30 a.m. on Saturday and were still left to help clear up after the last walkers had gone home with the last of us leaving at 2 p.m. on Sunday having been out and about throughout the event.

Next year's marshals' walk 2/3 September 1995

MAKE A NOTE IN YOUR DIARY NOW!!

Main Walk 14/15 October 1995

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO RUN THIS EVENT SUCCESSFULLY

Paul [REDACTED]

Congratulations to Paul for the splendid organisation, particularly sorting out the menu. I see that last year Paul was described as Entries Secretary and Lord High Everything Else: that description, apt again this year, could also, perhaps, be applied to other Events Secretaries. The Committee is working towards achieving a much broader spread of responsibility for the many tasks involved in running events - route planning, entries, marshals, checkpoint venues, checkpoint opening and closing times, menus, buying provisions, equipment, printing, results, certificates, badges, first aid, transport, telephones etc. Already some volunteers, both members of the Committee and others, have come forward and it is hoped that by the A.G.M. most jobs for our three annual events (Sevenoaks Circular, High Weald Walk and Wealden Waters Walk) will be covered - offers of help to any Committee member. It is envisaged that the Entries Secretary will, inevitably, remain a focal point for enquiries but will be able to direct enquirers to different people for various aspects. A list of those people and their responsibilities will, I hope, be published in the next Newsletter. In the meantime I am pleased to report that Paul has developed a keen interest in food - "I could have told you that", Mary will probably say and she might well add something about my eating habits!

Tom S. [REDACTED]

The Founders' Toposcope : 9 October 1994

I went on the original date some weeks earlier In the early morning sun I tidied my parents' grave in Ewhurst churchyard, just to the south, and then potted up Pitch Hill for the unveiling at 10.30. There was a fine view and a half-finished stone plinth, but nothing and nobody else. Tony Cartwright arrived a little later to explain that, because of the mason's illness, the ceremony had been postponed until 9 October. He had come out just in case - and found me, the one person who had failed to get the message Still, it was a truly lovely morning, so I went for a short walk in the woods; and I determined to get to the real thing if I possibly could.

As it happened, there was no chance of my helping with the Wealden Waters because of other commitments, but by going to 8 a.m. Communion at Kemsing I could take in Pitch Hill before having to be at Maidstone in the early afternoon. So I duly committed myself to the agonies of the M25 and arrived in the rough car park north of the hill in good time. It was already filling - Barbara Blatchford, fresh from a week on Arran; Margaret Steer; Don and Jackie Newman sporting Kent sweatshirts (they live in Peaslake, just two miles distant!); Gillian Bull, Tony Youngs, Mark Pickard and many other stalwarts of the Surrey group. At about 10.15 the gathering moved off for the summit.

I should perhaps explain why Pitch Hill already meant so much to me. My father's job as a Police sergeant took us to Cranleigh in 1953, and during my mid and late teens I walked and ran up the hill at almost every hour of the day and night, in all kinds of weather, and almost always solo. I knew practically every yard of the ground from Winterfold to Holmbury, and beyond that to Leith Hill. I tried to find 'rock' to scramble up in the old quarry at the back, which is now again in production, and in it I even practised kicking steps in steep frozen snow. Some of my most adrenalin-charged hours ever were spent helping soldiers and firemen - I acted as guide as well as beater - to fight a massive fire streaming on the wind up the valleys from Peaslake; I remember the tops of pines igniting, almost exploding, many yards in front of the flame wall which came at us at a fast walking pace. During the last thirty years I have returned many times to the Hill: it has never disappointed. Once or twice I have tried to follow Smythe's 1930s route, when he and his friends 'lounged' (Smythe's word) over these summits, where he felt 'the spirit of the hills' over and around him, as he had felt it in the Alps and Himalaya.

As we reached the flat, grassy summit I saw something which I had never previously seen there, in more than forty years - two cars parking by the trig. point. Mild shock and resentment subsided when we realised that this was Hurtwood Control's Ranger and a colleague bringing elders to the ceremony. We crossed the summit and ^{went} slightly downwards over the first terrace to the prow which juts out towards Ewhurst. The sun shone; Hascombe Hill to the west and Leith Hill to the east could just be seen, but mist still filled the hollows in front, and that marvellous, smooth, evocative line of the South Downs punctuated by Chanctonbury and Cissbury was hidden.

The memorial was covered with purple. We stood in front of it, people of all ages but weighted towards the veteran end. Tony Cartwright welcomed us, and introduced Mrs Bray, whose family owns nearly half the Hurtwood Control area. She spoke eloquently about the foundation and work of the Control - she apologised for the faintly Big Brother-ish seventy-year-old name, but the Charity Commissioners won't easily be persuaded to change it - and said that it was created to allow 'air and exercise' for all those who wanted to enjoy its 4000 acres, and free access to all its land, not just the paths. She thanked the LDWA for making the memorial possible and a pair for the one already on Holmbury. Keith Chesterton, hotfoot from the Wealden Waters (literally - he finished it at 6 a.m.), spoke movingly of Alan and Chris, and thought that Alan's spirit would not lightly have forgiven him if he had not both finished the Wealden Waters and got to Pitch Hill. Both Barbara and Margaret spoke words of gratitude and quiet pride; and then they lifted back the covering to unveil the memorial toposcope.

It sits embedded in a plinth of rough local stone. The top part shows the skyline, and equally the pattern of fields and woods leading out to the skyline, so that the user can rapidly locate each landmark. There are brief accounts of the Hurtwood Control, of Alan and Chris and the famous poster in the old Post Office in Peaslake which led to the foundation of the LDWA, and of the flora and fauna of the hill. I had never known why Hurtwood is so called - 'hurts' is the local name for bilberries; I had certainly gorged on them here many a time without making the connection. Underneath the toposcope is an engraved plaque in affectionate memory of Alan and Chris.

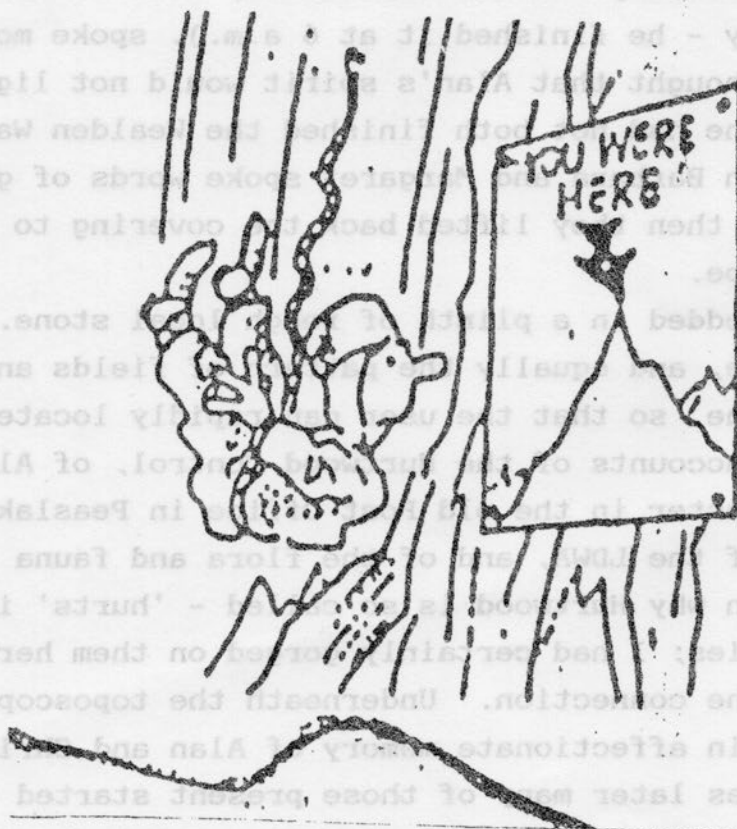
A few minutes later many of those present started on a twelve-mile walk, past that seminal ex-Post Office and to a viewpoint where one can look across to Steer's Field and Blatchford Down on the

scarp of the North Downs. According to well-established LDWA tradition, by which no alliterative opportunity is ever knowingly passed by, the walk was named on Tony Youngs' admirably illustrated walk leaflet as 'The Toposcope Toddle'. The rest of us returned thoughtfully to the car park.

And it was on the way down that I found out something which promised much future pleasure. Mark Pickard is writing his autobiography and actively looking for a publisher. It contains, he told me, some interesting and amusing anecdotes. (I thought, you bet it does) Mark has not had too easy a time in recent years, for someone with the rare and precious skills of a Ph.D. medical physicist. I hope a publisher is soon found, and that everyone out there buys it.

Meanwhile, go to Pitch Hill and savour that toposcope and the hill which it graces. Take your time. It is most emphatically not a spot just to be cursorily glimpsed while speeding over the Surrey Summits.

Martyn Berry



Reproduced below is the afore-mentioned photograph supplied by Bryan Clarke, together with his comments. After the subsequent article (from 'The Times') you will find the usual 'disclaimer' sentence which applies also, nay, even more so, to the photograph. Whence it came Bryan has not revealed and there are no prizes for identifying the gender of the three posteriors but you might find it amusing to think up a suitable caption - let your imaginations run riot and I will think of an appropriate prize.

The caption entries are awarded prizes as follows:

The George Bernard Shaw Prize	Laurie
The Joshua Tetley Prize	John
The Robertson's "Golliwog" Prize	Keith
The Freud Prize	Shirley

All four will be presented in liquid form of the recipient's own choice at an early opportunity. Tom S.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Does anyone remember those early Kent Group social walks? We enjoyed those days getting to know one another in all kinds of weather. More pictures from way back in the Group photograph album.

TRAILS AND TRIBULATIONS

With the long, hot summer almost over, flashpoints between local farmers and ramblers will recede. But the work of the Countryside Commission and highways authorities to sort out the mess of public paths will continue until 2000, by which time Britain should have a network of footpaths, bridleways and trails which will be legally defined and should be properly maintained and publicised.

In the meantime, families will look with bemusement at the Ordnance Survey map, with its dotted lines crossing the countryside, and then stare at the blackthorn hedge in front of them and wonder where the path is, why there is no stile or gate, and who it was who drew up such a misleading map. While walkers may be hunting the missing path or wondering if mountain bikes can be ridden on footpaths or bridleways, many local farmers and landowners will be cursing the local authority for making modification orders to the Definitive Map under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, upgrading a footpath to a bridleway or recording that there is a right of way through the farmer's backyard leading to moorland or some long-disused track.

The mess created by these conflicting rights - those of landowners to enjoy their property in peace and quiet, against those of ramblers to exercise rights of way which may be immemorial - goes back to the last century. Tess of the D'Urbervilles was able to walk from Flintcombe Ash across the Blackmore Vale 100 years ago without any problem. Even at the start of this century, country people still used to cross each other's land to go to church. Tess's long-distance journey was possible largely because of the Highways Act 1835, which made the public responsible for repairing existing "highways".

Everything changed in the 20th century with the arrival of the motor car, metalled surfaces and the need for a surveying authority to establish who could go where, and what was a highway and maintainable at public expense. In 1949 the Government passed the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, which obliged all county councils to draw up Definitive Maps and Statements recording legal rights of way over private land, after surveying existing highways.

Not surprisingly, many authorities carried out perfunctory or hopelessly inadequate surveys, landowners were not fully informed of what was going on and rights of way were marked where none had existed, footpaths were marked as bridleways or vice versa, and other paths which were friendly arrangements between neighbours and friends were elevated to "legal rights of way" enabling anyone to walk over someone else's land.

The net result is that Definitive Maps and Statements up and down the country are incomplete, bear little relation to what happens on the ground and are a breeding ground for open warfare between pressure groups such as the Open Spaces Society and the Country Landowners' Association.

continued overleaf

Even path rationalisation schemes are condemned by some of the more vocal "rights of way" enthusiasts, while landowners say they are happy to "permit" friends and locals to cross their land but object to outsiders claiming a "legal right" to trample across their land however inconvenient that may be.

Into this mess has stepped the Countryside Commission, to help to bring some sense to what is one of the most exasperating and unsatisfactory areas of legal fact-finding. By the end of the century, all Definitive Maps should have been rationalised and updated and should clearly show not just local paths but also walks, rides and the more easily definable regional routes and national trails.

But sorting out this nightmare is causing legal bills to rocket. Some landowners, forced to try to maintain the value of their property against adverse rights of way, are running up six-figure bills judiciously reviewing local inspectors' reports confirming what they believe to be a dotty local authority modification order to the Definitive Map.

And it is the reliance on outdated tithe maps, estate documents or records going back years which may weigh most heavily with the local inspector. What may be sensible and practical today in deciding where a right of way exists has to be ignored as the inspectors are there simply to "find the facts". This nonsense is eloquently stated in the Countryside Commission's own document, "A guide to Definitive Map procedures", which declares that a Definitive Map must be modified, regardless of any effect on anyone's property interests, or whether or not the routes physically exist at the present time on the ground".

In most other areas of legal fact-finding, the judge or tribunal chairman would almost certainly be given a wide discretion when dealing with evidence which may be years out of date. Not in this area of law, and unlike in other cases where the court will be called on to come to a decision based on a "balance of convenience" test, the local inspector has little or no discretion and the landowner or ramblers' group may have to resort to the Highways Act procedures, and further legal expenditure to get a footpath or bridleway diverted or rationalised.

The irony of all this is that while the Government talks of levying tolls on roads so that those who maintain them can recoup the cost, there is little or nothing to encourage or help farmers to maintain stiles, footpaths and signs on behalf of the county so that walkers know where they can sensibly enjoy the countryside. In this respect the National Trust, with its coastal paths in Cornwall, is a paragon of virtue and an example to be followed - something the Countryside Commission is already doing with its 960-mile long South West Coastal Path.

continued overleaf

The Government must act quickly to give local inspectors a far wider discretion to rationalise Definitive Maps and Statements. They need a list of criteria which must be followed before modification orders of any kind can be made.

Until this happens, the warfare between ramblers and landowners will continue unabated and the lawyers will clean up.

Alistair Brett

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Quite a few Kent Group members have recently become involved, as volunteers, in the Public Rights of Way (PROW) Survey for the K.C.C. and therefore I thought worth reproducing - with permission, of course, the above article from the "Times" of 23/8/94. As always the inclusion of any article in this Newsletter does not imply that the opinions are a reflection of LDWA policy. Nevertheless many of us would, I believe, welcome a more commonsense and less legalistic approach to the whole question of Rights of Way. For one thing and "with all due respect to my learned friend" it would be vastly cheaper and far less cumbersome.

Harold Mann has kindly given me a copy of the Swale Footpaths Group's Newsletter and permission to quote from it. Their Secretary writes: "If you find problems on rights of way, please don't just grumble! Notifying KCC and/me may be the first step to getting things put right." (remember John Probert's article 'The Footpath' in the last issue?). The Swale Newsletter also contained a piece which appeared in an earlier issue of this periodical. It was headed 'Along with the Horned Helmets' and was written by one Keith Warman!

CONGRATULATIONS to Keith and to all Kent Group members who completed a very rainy, muddy Three Forests, particularly Jan O'Rourke, who finished her first hundred kilometre overnight walk at the first attempt.

THE MARATHON TRILOGY (SEVEN SISTERS/SNOWDONIA/DUBLIN)

The aims of this excursion were:

1. To complete the above 3 marathons on consecutive days,
2. To finish each one faster than the previous one,
3. To run them carrying a rucksack containing provisions, first aid kit and wet weather clothes.

Seven Sisters - 29th October (1500 starters)

The journey to Eastbourne was through torrential rain thus increasing the apprehension of tackling the 3 marathons. However, someone up there loves us. The rain stopped before the start, but it did make the ground underfoot 'deliciously muddy'. The course is well-known for its hills but with the added delight to the very strong winds of slimy and glutinous mud - 'Oh, deep joy!!'

continued overleaf

The checkpoints are very different from road marathons' drink stations, especially checkpoint 3. At Litlington hot tea and soup (plus cold drinks), hot cross buns and sausage rolls were available for all participants. An excellent brass band was playing which did not encourage further participation but the arduous Seven Sisters were still to be savoured.

I duly fulfilled stage 1 of the 'Trilogy' in the splendid company of Alan Leggatt, Adrian Forster and Mike Godsolve (Dartford Harriers) in 4 hrs and 34 mins. The free swim afterwards was just what was required. The atmosphere amongst the participants was extremely positive.

Snowdonia - 30th October (1200 starters)

I picked up Graham Ives (100k Association and LDWA) and Rob Baukham (Gravesend Road Runners and LDWA) at 2.00 a.m. and arrived, again through torrential rain, at Llanberis at 7.45 a.m. The course, like the Seven Sisters, has excellent views but the top of Snowdon was shrouded in mist. Luckily we completed the marathon without any rain but the wind was as strong as on the previous day.

There were only three hills; the first one lasts 4 miles, the next one 3 miles and the last 2 miles. For those who completed the Seven Sisters and suffered on that very steep finish, on Snowdonia, at 24 miles, the drop was steeper, longer (a mile), ruttier, stonier and more slippery. In fact my legs felt like jelly which made it hard work to run the last mile on the road. I completed it in 4 hrs 31 mins. So still on target. Camaraderie amongst competitors, supporters, marshals/police: excellent.

After a quick shower in one of the hotel rooms we picked up a fourth member, Mick McGaughey (unattached), who was due to run his first marathon, and rushed to Holyhead to catch the ferry to Dublin. What a crossing! 4 hrs of Gale Force 8 which meant we arrived at 10 p.m. A quick cup of tea and, as Zebedee stated, so to bed.

Dublin - 31st October (3000+ starters)

Once again it was raining on our way to the start and, as previously, it stopped before the race began. The race was through the streets of Dublin, with the only ride (dare I say 'pimple' after the Seven Sisters and Snowdonia?) occurring through Phoenix Park.

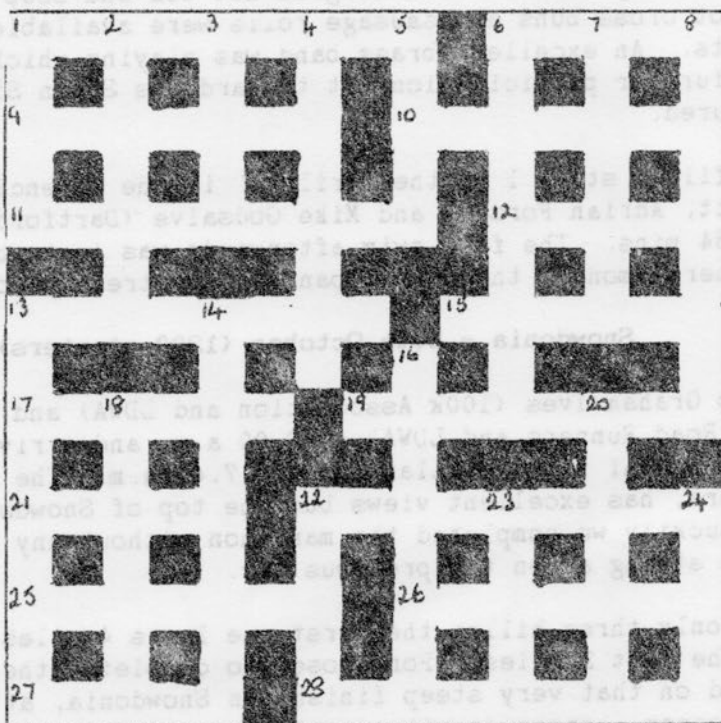
Even though it did rain during this race it is one that will be worth doing again. The atmosphere and organisation were first class. The 'goody bags' were the best ever. And what a finish!! The last 4 miles were downhill. I fulfilled all of my aims with a time of 4hrs 8 mins.

Merv Nutburn.

N.B. This article is an abbreviated version of the one Merv originally wrote for the New Eltham Joggers Newsletter a copy of which reached me courtesy of Bryan Clarke with a message, 'use what you like', so I have.

Tom S.

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD



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Solutions to Shirley Higgins by 28 February 1995.
Contributions for next issue to me by 6 March 1995. Tom S.

STOP PRESS

When proof-reading the newsletter my 'staff' came across a letter which I had cut out of the paper in September: here it is:-

SIMPLE SIGNAL FOR MOUNTAIN RESCUE

Sir, I work in the Scottish Mountains, radio-tracking the golden eagle as part of a project for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The birds I monitor each carries a miniature radio transmitter (matchbox size) which emits signals on an individually identifiable frequency. My success in locating a bird depends on various factors but I am rarely thwarted.

Like many others I have been horrified by the number of avoidable deaths in our mountains in recent years, due to a combination of factors which include poor map reading, inadequate safety equipment and the inability to gauge personal levels of fitness and competence.

I am convinced that the portable, inexpensive and easily available radio-technology we use for eagles could and should be applied to assist rescue teams in their search for lost, exhausted and injured parties in the mountains.

It would shorten the time taken to locate climbers, thus increasing the likelihood of survival while simultaneously reducing the risk to the searchers. I myself carry such a small radio-transmitter while in the mountains, as do all those involved in this work.

Such radio tags could be made available for hire from police stations, public houses, youth hostels and mountain rescue huts, to be "signed out" with a fully returnable deposit. They could then be used by high-risk groups (very young or very old or inexperienced people) and in high-risk areas and/or conditions. The technology is simple to use and maintain, and is ready and waiting.

Yours faithfully,
Justin Grant



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That is, REALLY, the end of this bumper issue. Tom S.