



LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION

Kent Group

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

NEWSLETTER



NUMBER 38

DECEMBER 1995

COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN.....RON ROWETH (██████████)
TREASURER.....ALAN BALL (██████████)
SECRETARY.....DAVID SHELDRAKE (██████████)

MEMBERS

ANN BEECHING (██████████) TREVOR BLAKE (██████████)
ANDREW BOULDEN (██████████) BRIAN BUTTIFANT (██████████)
PAUL HATCHER (██████████) NEAL O'ROURKE (██████████)
KEVIN PUTTOCK (██████████)

KENT GROUP PROGRAMME DECEMBER 1995 TO APRIL 1996

THURS DEC 28 20 MILE ROUTE CHECK OF SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR
Meet 8 a.m. Buckhurst 2 Car Park (GR 533546). Carry food,
probable pub stop. Leader: Brian Buttifant (██████████)
FRI JAN 5 MEDWAY GAP NIGHT WALK - Meet at "The Bush",
Aylesford (GR733592), 9.30 p.m. for 10.30 p.m. start.
Leader: Ivan Waghorn (██████████)
FRI JAN 19/
SUN JAN 21 BRECON BEACONS WEEKEND - Details on page 14.
SUN JAN 28 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - Details enclosed.
SUN FEB 18 20 MILES APROX FROM WALMER - Meet at Walmer Castle
Car Park (GR379502) 8.45 a.m. Pub stop, food available. Leader:
Patrick Clay (██████████)
SUN FEB 25 SEVENOAKS OUTCROPS WALK - Meet 10 a.m. at One Tree
Hill N.T. Car Park (GR559531). 10 miles approx., plenty of
incident, preferably wear old clothes. No Pub Stop. Finish about
4 p.m. Leader: Martyn Berry (██████████)
SUN MAR 3 SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR MARSHALS' WALK - Meet 8 a.m.
Buckhurst 2 Car Park (GR533546) for 30 or 20 mile route.
SUN MAR 17 SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR - offers of help to Brian
Buttifant (██████████).
SUN MAR 31 20/25 MILES. Meet at Ivy House, Stelling Minnis
(GR147483) for 9 a.m. start. Parking near Green. Pub lunch.
Contact Liz Keeler (██████████) or Jean Clements (██████████).
SUN APR 14 LINTON LURCH - 18 miles from Linton. Meet in
Public C.P. by Church (GR755503). 9 a.m start. Pub stop Peckham
Bush, 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', Pye Corner,
Ulcombe, in odd-numbered months and at 'The Horse and Groom',
Wrotham Hill, A.20, in even-numbered months, from 8 p.m. onwards.
N.B. CHANGE OF VENUE w.e.f. from February 1996.

Dear Fellow K L D Ws,

This issue's cover carries a black and white reproduction of the original Wealden Waters badge which is appropriate because of Tony Twyman's reflections on the first WWW. My thanks to Brian Buttifant for the loan of the badge and to all contributors - too numerous to mention except, perhaps, the chap who wrote a 4-page report and then illustrated someone else's report.

The second Sunday in August saw about 130 starters on the second Summer High Weald Walk which was an Andredsweald Circuit this year and followed a good route through varied countryside. The report and results are enclosed. The next Group event was the Wealden Waters Marshals' Walk about which an article appears later. Congratulations to the authoress who completed her first 100K walk, as did Jim James, and to all the other finishers.

YORKSHIRE DALES HUNDRED: 25, 26 and 27 MAY 1996

Offers of help at the finish to Paul Hatcher (01233-840669), please. See his article for details of shifts etc.

As usual at this time of year Brian Buttifant is on the look-out for volunteers to staff checkpoints on the SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR. Why not 'phone him first and ask for the job YOU want?

The possibility of a '100' in Kent in the year 2000 may well be on the agenda at the A.G.M. so do try to come along to Wye Village Hall on Sunday 28th January 1996. For details see the enclosed notice and please ensure that you complete the tear-off slip and return it to Andrew. The A.G.M. is also your opportunity to elect Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer and other Committee members and a nomination form is enclosed. Completed forms should be sent, by 12th January 1996, to: David Sheldrake, [redacted] David also reminds us that our 1996 Kent Group subscriptions (£3) become due in January and should be sent to him at the above address or, if you prefer, brought to the A.G.M.

WEALDEN WATERS WALK. The report and results are enclosed. Thanks to all who made cakes, trifles etc. Next year's Marshal's walk is due to be on 31st August/1st September and the main event on 12th/13th October 1996. MAKE NOTES IN YOUR 1996 DIARY as soon as you get one!

I gather that the 1995 hippopotamus hooley (otherwise known as 'The Gatliff') was as muddy as ever. Articles on that and on any other suitable subject should reach me by the first Monday in March 1996 to be sure of inclusion (at editorial discretion) in the April issue - illustrations, crosswords, etc. also welcome.

Tom Sinclair, [redacted]

DIARY OF A COMMON MAN - THE SHROPSHIRE HUNDRED: BY KEITH WARMAN

The night before . . . checkpoint numbers, grid references, distances, opening times, ascent between checkpoints and route description - all safely memorised. Concerned upon reading organiser's helpful tips called, "Finding the Way" that despite all the efforts they have made, we will be "confused, lost and heartily cursing the idiot who compiled the route description". "Hmmmmmm" - we shall see. More useful tips, this time entitled "A survivor's guide to 100 mile walking" warns of the perils of trench foot, dehydration, the wall, hypothermia and hallucinations. (I wonder what I am doing here).

The start . . . Amidst the magical atmosphere and frenzied excitement Neil Higham and I decide that we shall give the field 10 minutes start, during which time last minute kit checks will be enacted and a sense of peace and serenity will be sought. Normality returns to Madeley Court Centre although Pauline Barnett, Kevin Puttock and Jackie Davis seem keen to thrust us on our way for fear we may be left behind, or something. So off we go.

Two miles . . . The Policewoman at Coalbrookdale seems a bit confused as we amble across a busy road whose traffic she has just held up to enable the field to cross safely.

Three miles . . . The first stile. We arrive as the last 4 people are crossing it and congratulate ourselves for our 10 minute delay.

Seven miles . . . Annoyed because I fail to point out wayside orchid to Neil which I had spotted during my reconnoitre.

Twelve miles . . . Whoops! Nearly miss right turn before Blakeway Farm.

Fifteen miles . . . Checkpoint Two at Hughley is most welcome. Amusement at reading A. E. Housman quotation which appears in the description. The Lawley and Caer Caradoc clearly in view. Neil panicking about climbing the latter and I try to reassure him that everything will be alright.

Seventeen miles . . . Walking along the top of Netherwood Coppice I need emergency pit stop and stumble 30 yards down a dangerously loose slope into the trees for privacy. Whilst searching for toilet tissue, curse my luck as mug tips out and bounces down through trees. Must retrieve it as will be disqualified without it at random kit checks. (Not an easy task!)

Eighteen miles . . . Catch Neil up at Broome - feeling much better - that is me, not Neil.

Nineteen miles . . . Beautiful paths around the southern flank of the Lawley to reach Comley hamlet and discover the oasis of an extra drinks stop.

Twenty miles . . . The serious ascent of Caer Caradoc begins with a string of entrants disappearing over the summit. We find the self clipper and notice vicious black clouds driving in from east. Whilst traversing summit ridge, horizontal sleet collides with us. The wonderful views are lost as the stinging sleet does its evil worst. Glad I chose to wear shorts.

Twenty two miles . . . Raining hard at Church Stretton as I seek comfort in the public conveniences. With Neil, leave cheery Checkpoint run by Essex/Herts. Group and ascend through woodland towards the Long Mynd.

Twenty three miles Raining stair rods in Cardingmill Valley. Meet Ivan and Sue Verrell and seek shelter under canopy whilst exchanging pleasantries.

Twenty four miles Wade through ford, resigning to have wet feet and, whilst climbing up onto Long Mynd, the thought that this could be the beginning of a long wet night fills us with trepidation.

Twenty five miles On Long Mynd and, amazingly, the rain stops and sky clears. Very pleasant grassy paths across Wild Moor - could this be named after Edric the Wild, a Shropshire landowner? - before dropping to secret hamlet of Ratlinghope.

Twenty seven miles More undulating experiences to meet Ian Needham sitting by wayside waiting for Judy Rickwood who, unfortunately, was having a difficult time.

Twenty nine miles With the haunting silhouette of the Stiperstones ahead, an impromptu kit check beckons. Offered carbonated spring water, no kit check and are soon on our way climbing around The Devil's Chair.

Thirty one miles Checkpoint Five at The Bog. Huddled up under a windwhipped awning. With darkness approaching, want to press on to clear the steep rocky scramble down from The Rock before torching up.

Thirty three miles Made it! Clamber down from The Rock in the last strands of daylight.

Thirty four miles Whilst descending a grassy field I am amazed to find Neil not behind me. An anxious 5 minutes follow and then I see his torch staggering back along a rough track, having missed a hidden stile. Near Ridge Farm chat to local farmer who was very kindly offering water to us.

Thirty four miles The incessant climb to Linley Hill rewards with wonderful cooling breeze as we drop through a beech avenue.

Thirty seven miles Saddened to see a very unwell Judy at Checkpoint 7 (Lydham) - the local farmer had driven her here and she unfortunately had to retire.

Thirty eight miles Crossing farmland towards Bishops Castle we can always see torches both ahead and behind us.

Thirty nine miles Follow a local threesome through the back alleys of Bishops Castle and out onto the Kerry Ridgeway to climb towards Offa's Dyke.

Forty three miles It is 1.00 am and Neil decides it is too late to phone Sarah from phone box alongside Dog and Duck Cottage.

Forty four miles Join Offa's Dyke, cross the River Unk then steeply up and even more steeply down to Checkpoint 8 and Churchtown. This resembles a bit of a battlefield but we are superbly fed and watered. Willing marshals.

Forty seven miles Leave Offa's Dyke at Hergan for superb path over Cefns, the descent of which into Clun coincides with the first glint of daylight. Relieved - we got away very lightly weatherwise.

Fifty miles The haunting ruins of Clun Castle welcome us to Checkpoint 9 - the Breakfast stop - where, in somewhat crowded circumstances, bowls of hot water are also provided to refresh aching feet.

Fifty three miles A haunting early morning traverse of Bury Ditches Hill Fort.

Fifty six miles Checkpoint 11 at Kempton. Seriously begin to feel very tired now but must plod on as do not want to give Paul Hatcher too much ammunition.

Sixty miles Meander round docile brown bull.

Sixty one miles Spend far too long at Checkpoint 12 at Craven Arms - about an hour and a half. But you know what it is like - we get comfortable, are plied with food and drink and enter into long conversation with a brace of Partridges (Ian and Mary).

Sixty three miles More A. E. Housman on the route description. Also Paul Hatcher's helpful hint No. 256 means I fly up around Norton Hill to have to wait for Higham N. But wait I do.

Sixty six miles Get caught up by Ian Needham at Checkpoint 13 - Seifton, and decide our twosome will become a merry threesome. Nice cosy checkpoint with varnished panelled walls. Food good. Our newly formed threesome immediately disbands as I shoot out of the checkpoint leaving Ian and Neil to rest.

Sixty eight miles Very heavy rain shower near Christmas Cross. Legs get soaked walking through long grass. Serves me right for leaving the other two.

Seventy miles Try desperately to work out how Sutton Hill can be on my left, according to route description strip map, but on my right, according to OS map.

Seventy two miles Neil and Ian catch me up and I promptly take them off route for half a mile on the descent from Weston Hill for which I am verbally castigated for the next 4 minutes.

Seventy three miles Delighted to meet a recovered Judy at Stoke St. Milborough. She leads us through the village to Checkpoint 14.

Seventy four miles Last shelter until Much Wenlock I read on the checkpoint summary sheet. This will be a long 18 miles even though there are 2 outdoor checkpoints in between. Neil and Ian go on as I need another visit to you know where (Andrexx paper this time).

Seventy six miles The ascent of Abdon Burf proves frustrating. Catch up Brian Russell who is thrashing around trying to find the correct line. We decide to take a bearing to gain the summit ridge before heading north for a mile to the self clipper at trig point.

Seventy nine miles Another welcome drinks point which seems to provide me with rocket fuel because I suddenly feel so refreshed, eating up the next 3 miles to catch and pass Neil and Ian in a cloud of mud.

Eighty four miles Get far too comfortable at Checkpoint 16 - Wilderhope Manor, and cannot tear myself away from the brazier amidst the descending darkness. Torch up and eventually set off into the second night along easy tracks towards Easthope.

Eighty seven miles The torch coming towards me and calling my name belongs to Paul Hatcher and I am delighted to meet this Midnight Man of Kent who leads me to Checkpoint 17 at Presthope where I have to ensure not to wake the carbound sleeping Mary.

Eighty nine miles Walk with Paul for another half a mile through Wenlock Edge woodland before he returns to his car.

Ninety miles Struggle to keep awake and consequently nearly miss crucial right turn onto track dropping towards Much Wenlock.

Ninety two miles . . . Checkpoint 18 in village hall of historic Much Wenlock - find Neil and Ian slouching against a wall.

Ninety three miles . . . Inner comfort knowing that I have reconnoitred this last stage earlier in the week.

Ninety four miles . . . Our conversations become more disjointed and I am sure we are all hallucinating as we stumble down a tricky woodland path towards the Ironbridge Gorge.

Ninety five miles . . . The old railway track leading to Ironbridge. My memory recalls the organisers note to supporters which suggests they stand on The Iron Bridge and "watch 'em stagger across the Bridge, wild-eyed and weary. Tell 'em there is still 3 miles to go and see what they say!" We are too tired to care.

Ninety six miles . . . Over the world famous Bridge and under street lights for the first time since Clun. Frustrated that Neil and Ian fail to appreciate the finer points of the crenellated cast iron kerb-stones which adorn the town.

Ninety seven miles . . . Up steep outside steps to the village hall - the last checkpoint. We eventually leave under the first signs of daylight which make our torches superfluous.

Ninety eight miles . . . Along the Ironbridge Gorge now on lanes and back alleys to rest at the canal basin below the Horsehay inclined plane. This area reeks of times past. We can smell the meal waiting for us as we lurch through the dawn, speechless, just wanting to rest our weary limbs. (We later discovered that a certain Apse Heath granny managed to become mislaid here, poor dear, and had to ask directions to reach the finish).

Ninety nine miles . . . Anne Beeching comes to meet and guide us back to the Madeley Court Centre.

ONE HUNDRED MILES . . . Great relief fills our soles! We are superbly looked after by our fellow Group Members. Wonder how I managed to walk this distance without one wink of sleep for the first time. Thank my two chums for their company and for putting up with me.

Finally, I am sure that all Group Members who took part in the Shropshire 100 would join me in offering sincere and heartfelt thanks to the organisers, marshals and helpers who made it all possible.

Now, where did I put that Sleeping Bag? Ah yes.... zzzzzz.....

ANYONE YOU RECOGNISE?

In 1976 a teenager, one arm in a cast due to cracked bones in hand and wrist, cycled to Guildford armed with map, compass and a packet of cigarettes, to take part in the Masters and Maidens Marathon, not realising that it was a road race.

He took part, alternately jogging and walking, made himself sick by buying and eating an iced lolly en route and eventually finished in just under 5 hrs 18 mins, with only 8 other participants behind him. He then wearily cycled home, just stopping for a hamburger and a cigarette.

Recognise him? Turn to page 7.

EVIDENCE OF A MISSPENT YOUTH

The brief summary on page describes the first attempt at a competitive event of Mark Pickard. Many Kent Group members will know Mark from his regular participation in the Sevenoaks Circular (14 between 1977 and 1994; on 8 occasions the first finisher) and from meeting him on other LDWA events, always modest and quietly spoken.

However, that quiet exterior covers an iron will and an insatiable appetite for running long distances. After that first attempt mark improved in 1977 to under 3 hrs 40 mins, since when he has run 180 consecutive road marathons under 3 hours. He ran 27 of these in 1988, 12 of them in as many weeks between 14th August and 6th November. Even more amazing is that in that period, in addition, he won the London to Brighton road race and finished 4th in the South London Harriers 30.

Yet Mark's fastest years were already behind him. In 1981 he set a U.K. 24 hour track record, which at that time was 2nd on the world all-time list; ran his fastest time for the London to Brighton and his best marathon time, 2 hrs 21 mins 24 secs.

In 1982 Mark had horrendous problems with his leg which almost brought his running to an end and took about two years to overcome. Whether his problems arose from pushing himself too hard at too young an age, or his junk food diet, which he freely admits, we shall never know. It is significant perhaps that Mark has always been determined to finish an event no matter how badly he has been suffering and prides himself in keeping going come what may. You have to admire that sort of determination, but question whether it is always wise.

This brief summary is extracted from an autobiography entitled 'Evidence of a Misspent Youth', which Mark has recently had published. It is a fascinating insight into Mark's running career and problems over the last twenty years and, for a very modest sum, makes interesting reading. It can be obtained for £7.50, including post & packing, direct from Mark at:-
[REDACTED] Cheques payable to M. Pickard.

Too late for inclusion in the book; I understand from Mark that this year he successfully completed the Bob Graham Round, achieved with very little preparation. For the uninitiated, membership of the Bob Graham Club is granted to anyone who successfully completes a circuit from Keswick totalling 72 miles and 27,000 feet of ascent over the Lakeland hills inside a time limit of 24 hours.

Ernie Bishop

PLAXTOL PLOD — 12th November 1995

This was an excellent walk in excellent weather led by our excellent leader-cum-News Letter Editor, Tom Sinclair. Twenty-one members turned out for this social walk from Borough Green and all had a great day covering about ten miles in the morning and sixish slower ones in the afternoon. The leisurely two-hour stop at the Papermakers Arms in Plaxtol was an enjoyable change from the usual eat-and-drink standing-up mode. Even so two of the group did have to be prised from the last delectable mouthfuls of dessert! (I declare that this is an unsolicited testimonial not produced under duress. Aaaaaaaagh!)

Bryan C.

THE WEALDEN WATERS MARSHALS' WALK - A BEGINNER'S REPORT

Grit, determination and stubbornness are one thing. Sixty-two miles are quite another. The challenge was there and, as it turned out, on the day, so was I - wondering what on earth I had let myself in for. I do not consider myself a particularly experienced walker - I have done only a few walks with the LDWA and I think the longest one was about 25 miles. I was now about to tackle over double that and, just a minor additional factor, I had never walked at night before. However, at 8.40 am on Saturday 2 September this keen green novice set off from Tunbridge Wells with Keith Warman to attempt what I soon considered to be the impossible. I could perhaps write a thesis on the next 24 hours but time and space need to be considered . . . so:

THE GOOD BITS

Setting off in sunshine with cheery encouragement from Paul Hatcher.
Being able to rely on Keith Warman to do the route/map reading.
The constant and mega-massive encouragement I received all the way from fellow walkers - particularly Neil, Brian and Moira.
The amazing back up at least every 7 miles. I was extremely impressed and more than extremely grateful for all the efforts throughout the day and night to provide the walkers with seats, hot food and drink, sarnies, trifles, cakes, biscuits, yogurts, fruit, home grown tomatoes, cooked breakfast, etc. ad infinitum. A veritable feast.
The Alta Rica Coffee at Checkpoint Two (it just happens to be the only coffee I drink!).
The cow on the enclosed footpath that needed 20 minutes persuasion to return to its field.
The sound of the owls in the dead of night.
The stars.
Scrumping greengages by torchlight (naughty but nice).
The sight of Paul, Kevin and Jean at the finish.
Removing backpack, trailbusters, socks.
The hot bath.
The welcome bed and deep deep sleep!

THE BAD BITS

Not having any sleep for 2 nights BEFORE I started!
The heavy cold that descended on me during Friday night.
Realisation after just 10 miles of the effort I was going to need.
The rain that came mid morning.
The ploughed up fields.
The six blisters (five on one foot and one on the other - three of them under toenails).
The night walking - it took me a good few hours to become used to following a beam of light. I was apprehensive and somewhat nervous and definitely did not like the sound of running water at night - I was convinced I was going to walk straight into a reservoir/lake/river/bottomless pit!
The stiles and gates at night which I swear grow taller in the dark.
The need to spend so many pennies during the night (I keep wondering why - I rarely do at home) - I was never quite sure just where to put my torch!!
The last 12 miles.



"The stiles.... which I swear grow
taller in the dark."

THE BEST BIT

Jogging in for the last quarter mile in an attempt to complete the walk in less than 24 hours (a deadline I had set for myself) and being told by Paul that we had made it in 23 hours 55 mins. Yippeeeeeeeee!

AND FINALLY . . .

When asked by Tom at one of the Checkpoints if I would write an article about "your first 60" I laughed as I did not think I would actually finish it, but I would say Tom that the hardest part was the last **TWO** miles so I tell my friends that I walked **62** miles - those last 2 miles seemed like 20!!!

For a fact I know that I could not have done it without the help and encouragement from everyone involved. Thank you, thank you all - from the bottom of my feet!

--- oOo ---

THE FIRST WEALDEN WATERS - 1981

Looking back now, 1981 seems such a long time ago, and perhaps with the passing of time the scars of those dark October days have healed enough for me to put pen to paper. For surely in its early days, the 'Wealden Waters' earned the reputation of being the nemesis of all the major events, 'Nemesis' being the goddess who destroyed those who claimed to be all-powerful.

My walking career had begun some 18 months previously when I joined the local rambling club on a 14 mile walk one Sunday morning. The group comprised mostly of very small, stern, bow-legged old ladies, whilst I at six-two towered over them like Gulliver, and spent the whole day lumbering along like a Leviathan in their wake.

Three months after this first outing I decided to tackle the Pennine Way, which I managed in 12 days, carrying almost 70lbs in my rucksack - mostly food as I was not aware there were shops along the way. With hindsight I should also have included a gas mask, as I was badly gassed at Gargrave and lucky to escape with my life!

Shortly after this I joined the L.D.W.A., triumphed in some of the minor walks and soon raised my sights to greater things. My eyes fell on the advert for the soon to be infamous 'Wealden Waters', 100Ks connecting the 3 reservoirs of Bewl Bridge, Weirwood and Bough Beech, with a 24 hour time limit - held in mid-October with 14 hours of darkness. Only those who can see in the dark like a cat should have been included on the entry form.

The great day arrived. What should I wear? I settled for thermals, thick shirt, jumper, boots [bigger the better], my new Craghopper trousers plus a rucksack full of spare clothes, batteries, and various home-made concoctions that even a hungry bluebottle would not touch!

The journey to Tunbridge Wells was easy enough with a 12 noon start. I arrived at the Neville Ground Tennis Club in good time, and, on opening the door, came my first shock. The hall was full of fine young men in singlet and shorts, clear-eyed, golden-haired, bronzed thighs that rippled as they bounded from one group to another. God! I felt inadequate!

The start was 1000 yards away at the Panities, from where we would retrace our steps past the tennis club and then into the unknown. At the ring of the bell the Lady Mayoress led us from the Panities back to the tennis club where, without breaking step, she climbed smartly into the back of her official limousine, and with a brief wave of her hand was gone. This was the signal for it to start raining. A cheer rose up ahead as the young Greek Gods raced off with their blonde curls tossing in the rain.

Soon it became obvious that the rain was in for a long time as splashing soon became splashing as we threaded our way on faint paths through ploughed fields and those slimy-surfaced hop fields, where we either tripped over loose string or fell over backwards or slithered about wildly with our arms in the air. Viewed from a distance we

resembled the inmates of a lunatic asylum on a day out! Not many miles after we had started I noticed my boot lace was undone, and after a brief stop I hurried after the others who by now had vanished. Two children emerged from a woodland path on my left, and ignoring their puzzled expressions, I hurried past them through a gate and down a path only to arrive at someone's back door. A gentleman emerged asking if he could help. I explained quickly and asked if I might use his side gate to regain the road. 'Yes' he replied, looking over my shoulder as he did so. There coming down the path behind me were about 20 walkers who had followed me. I shot through the gate like a rabbit, rejoined my small group, and spent the next few miles to Bewl Bridge CP telling lies about our walking abilities.

Neil Higham from the Surrey group did most of the navigation as we progressed steadily through worsening conditions towards Bowles Rocks CP, climbing wobbly stilts, wading swamps and fending off the dog attacks at Rock Robin Farm, which were to become a feature of the Wealden. We arrived at the CP just as darkness fell. From now on we would be navigating by torch light, a new experience for me.

Neil, his friend Gary and myself left the CP together. I found it very hard to navigate by night and began to lose touch with them. My Craghoppers were by now wet and beginning to slip down, causing an uncomfortable jump between my thighs, making walking even more tiring in heavy boots over wet ploughed fields and terrible footpaths which I'm sure had not been used since the Romans left Britain.

We trudged on in pouring rain which bent the woodland foliage downwards, forcing us to do the same. We gathered other walkers as we went along until we were about 14 in number. It had by now become colder, wetter and very dark indeed. All of us were worried about being left behind, and as a result we tried to walk 3 abreast on footpaths made for one. We pushed, shoved and jostled our way to Broadstone Warren CP, where we sat in the rain drinking hot soup by a large fire and we were very sulky to say the least.

Next stop was Weirwood Reservoir, CP 4. My Craghoppers were by now so wet and stiff I could not tell if I was holding them up, or them me. Fed up with our progress, I went to the front to try my hand at navigation, as it seemed impossible to cover more than a few 100 yards without some hitch, holly bushes were confused with oak trees and we crashed into each other in the terrible darkness. It was impossible to see each other in the forest, and almost as bad in the open, and we crashed through a front garden for the second time onto a small lane about 2 miles from the reservoir. We switched off our torches to save our batteries and promptly fell into the road side ditches.

The walk up till now had been very tough, yet it was to get worse on the path around the reservoir to the CP. I became convinced this path only existed in the tortured minds of incurable metis drinkers - with a high 'peerless' wire fence on our right and 18 inches away on our left was a Hawthorn hedge with bramble tentacles which ripped at our legs, tore hats from heads and map cases from our hands. Exposed roots underfoot tripped one against the fence, thence into the hedge and back again, all punctuated by a dull thump on the head by overhead branches. 1000 yards of this tested every one to breaking point, and we had hardly reached half way at 31 miles.

Weirwood CP gave us the choice of sitting in the warm changing rooms of the yachting

club or by the caravan outside. Needless to say I chose the warm on this night, and on the nights in years to come, from which more often than not I had to be persuaded to leave so as to keep my 100% record intact.

Fortified we set off once again. This time our destination was Beeches Farm near 'Dry Hill Fort'. The rain had eased enough for me to open my raincoat allowing me to hang my compass down inside my over trousers to stop it swinging about. We passed through the sailing club gates, turned left up a grass bank, over a stile to cross a field on a 65 degree bearing. I was last over the stile and to my surprise they were all walking on different bearings; torches could be seen in the darkness over a large area. Who should I follow? I reached down inside my over trousers for my compass but could not find it. In a panic I pulled the lanyard hard and almost emasculated myself. I'd put it in my Craghoppers by mistake. With one hand on my 'near-miss' and whimpering pitifully I stumbled through the night, reflecting on the life style of some unfortunate tom cats, and by sheer good luck found the gate they were all looking for. All pain forgotten I called out 'Over here. I've found it,' in rather a superior voice. Having been congratulated by all I was elected to lead them across the next field which I did and promptly got everyone lost again, a feat I was to repeat some years later in the company of Hugh Romer and Janet Chapman.

Passing through Forest Row we picked up the 'Vanguard Way'. This is a steady climb starting on top of an earth bank with exposed roots underfoot, soon to change to overhead foliage which was bent double and caught the tops of our rucksacks and propelled us backwards downhill only to receive a sharp head-butt in the buttocks from the next person in line. I was convinced at the time that all this buttocks butting caused the rain to start again as we trudged uphill, each one of us bearing a striking resemblance to Groucho Marx. A mile further on we passed Thornhill chicken farm where we were almost asphyxiated by the smell of chicken manure brought to life by the rain. The aroma took our minds off route finding and as a result we missed our left turn, and spent 10 minutes thrashing about in the bushes, holding our noses and breath, until for the umpteenth time Neil Higham came to our rescue.

As so often in a major event life outside the walk itself seems to recede and becomes meaningless as one struggles with one's mind and body to keep going. As we continued down hill on yet another terrible path my thoughts turned to the 'Greek Gods' ahead. In my mind's eye I saw them impervious to the mud and cold, shaking the rain from their golden locks, gliding through the darkness with smiles on their faces, revealing rows of white teeth which went on forever.

The slippery climb out of the small valley brought my thoughts back to reality. We went through a gate into a field - at last! Grass to walk on. My joy was short-lived as generous portions of cow pat lay in great abundance and were very slippery indeed. Those unlucky enough to slip soon found themselves lurching forward in a most undignified manner, with their trailing leg waving wildly in the air like a windsock.

Several gates and fields later, followed by a mile or so of steady uphill walking, saw us arriving at Beeches Farm CP, where we sat on bales of straw drinking hot tea and eating cold rice while the rain swept under the roof of the barn onto us. Moving among the weary walkers serving tea was a young man whose voice rose and fell like a rusty hinge on a kissing gate. Yes! Eric Rolfe in need of some Three-In-One oil!

When the time came to leave only six of the fourteen rose. We shuffled off soon to be enveloped in the bewildering folds of darkness over 'Dry Hill', down past 'New Barns Farm', wading shin-deep in goodness knows what, over ploughed fields, under and over railways. At one point we walked round and round a field looking for a single plank bridge buried deep in an enormous hedgerow. On another occasion we crossed the wrong bridge, covered 400 yards of heavy plough, only to discover a wide river instead of the railway we were expecting. We retraced our steps, crossed the correct bridge plus more ploughed fields [plough ad infinitum].

At Delaware Farm we saw a flashing light in the distance. 'It's the check point' we cried and hurried forward waving our torches in reply. 800 yards later we gathered round the flashing light with no sign of the checkpoint. We little realised then it would be a further 2 hours before we arrived at Winkhurst Green CP having taken 4.5 hours to cover 8 miles and around 20 hours for 50 miles.

Dawn had broken, it had stopped raining. Tray upon tray of food lay untouched on the table. We had barely sat down when someone asked the time. To our dismay we discovered there was less than 4 hours to cover the final 12 miles, or, at our present rate of progress we would be classed out of time. I stood up, gave my rucksack and wet gear to a marshal and told the others I was going on, as I did not wish to be classed out of time after all we had suffered. They all agreed, and we left the CP with the marshals calling us back to eat some food. But it was too late - we were on our way to Swayland CP 6 miles away. Sadly, we did not know then that only 14 walkers had gone through before us, hence all the food on display. The marshals had had a long vigil for almost nothing.

As we hurried away we began to spit up, myself with a man who claimed to have no skin on the soles of his feet because of his wellingtons. As a result he walked on tip - toe with his arms at 90 degrees to his body as though he were trying to fly.

We passed through Swayland with just 6 miles to go. By now I was all in and my back was playing up. But worse still, I had left my water bottle in my rucksack and I was becoming very thirsty indeed. I stopped at a puddle wondering if I should risk a drink. Just then one of the original 6 caught me up and gave me a drink from his litre bottle of orange which he had carried untouched since the start.

We arrived back at the Panlles with 33 minutes to spare. I was so exhausted I could not possibly walk the 1000 yards back to the tennis club, so Laurie Lowe kindly gave me a lift back in his car. In the club room we sat in complete silence, sipping our tea, heads hung down with fatigue. A few more walkers arrived, one of whom was Keith Wilson from our group. This made a total of 23 home inside the 24 hour time limit. I believe 75% of the starters retired quite early in the event. It transpired that more rain had fallen in the month prior to the walk than in the previous 10 months.

Two years later history repeated itself and once again we slogged through rain darkness and bitter cold. On this occasion I soloed 40 miles in 13 hours to finish 4th in 20. 5 hours.

After the 6th event I became the only walker to have completed every 'Walsden', and Mike Smith the founder - organiser became very keen that I should keep my 100%

record intact until I had reached 10 'not out'. This I promised to do, on the condition I received a gold watch inlaid with mother of pearl. Sadly Mike Smith was not present when I was invited to the Kent Group dinner in '92 to be presented with a beautiful plaque by their president, Peter Barnett. This plaque was engraved with my name for being, 'the only person since the Earth broke away from the Sun to have completed all ten Wealdens'. This figure has now risen to 12 and I have now set a target of 20. Who knows?

Many memories return as I write this article, mostly of whimpering alone in the dark. Others include fending off dogs, being chased by cows in the night, falling headfirst into a river, lost in fog, moonstroke, heatstroke, floods, just being missed by lightning, sleeping in bus shelters, losing my only bulb, frightening a cow which jumped clean over a 5-bar gate and ran away, chased in the night by a farmer who thought I was stealing his cows, of starting over an hour late, terrible thirst, of the time my car fell off the axle stand and landed on my chest a few days before the event so that my arms would not work very well. But perhaps the most lingering memories of all are those of the kindness and encouragement shown to me by members of the Kent group as I endeavoured to keep my 100% record intact over the years. I know that courage is not always enough when you have to leave a CP cold, tired and alone to face many more miles of mud, rain and darkness.

Well I trust you all enjoyed my journey from the past. As for the future, perhaps once again I'll tweak the nose of Nemesis and make it lucky 13. Oh! I almost forgot. What of the Greek Gods you ask? Well, they all retired by CP2. Funny old world ain't it!

Tony Twyman

As you will see from the results Tony did complete his 13th WWW. Well done, Tony! Your reward this time is a complimentary copy of this Newsletter. Many kind people have written to Paul expressing their thanks for the WWW. I particularly liked the following card from Norfolk and Suffolk Group:-

Dear All,

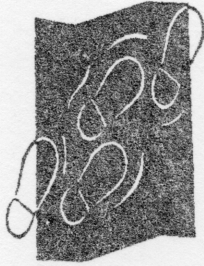
Thanks for a great weekend. We had a ball! Lovely food; superb marshals and excellent route. Couldn't have been better. Best Wishes.

We also heard from Kevin Marshall from Derby who thought the route description was perfect but had a minor complaint about the number of stiles and from George and Annie Foot who were very appreciative of all aspects except that the showers were not piping hot by the time they reached them - a problem they had encountered as organisers on the Wellington Boot. A much worse problem, a burglary, prevented Shirley and Chris Hume from taking part this year but I am pleased to report that the culprit was caught and their goods recovered. It was extremely kind of Shirley to take the trouble to write.

Are you interested in a Holiday in the Auvergne? Friends of mine from Kemsing are now living in Haute Loire, Central France, and, having restored an old farmhouse and barn on the edge of a hamlet 800' above sea level lying 20 miles north of Le-Puy-en-Velay, are offering full board accommodation. Our hosts, Terry and Barbara, have done all this before so are experienced in looking after visitors. Ernie and I were out there in June walking 8-15 mile routes while Celia and Brenda painted some local scenes. The walking routes have been given familiar route descriptions and the area is very rural, wooded and fairly easy. Only two bars were found en route and the nearest village is two miles from the farmhouse. Places to eat out are not easy to find locally - hence the full board. A warm welcome awaits you if this type of holiday appeals. Contact Ian Needham (UK Agent) [redacted] or myself [redacted] for details.

Brian Buttifant.

And now back to another aspect of the Wealden Waters.....



Wealden Waters

The night arrived misty and dark as we set off to Tunbridge Wells Tennis Club. Jim had spent the whole day slaving over a hot stove preparing jacket potatoes and apple crumbles - I of course had put in some long hours supervising operations and reading the newspaper! More difficult than this though was persuading two slightly reluctant teenagers that they wanted to spend the night serving up dinners. In the event they arrived at the venue, curled up in their sleeping bags and slept until 7am. However, I must say that their help with the washing up during the morning rush was invaluable.

Jim had a difficult period around 2 am but I managed to stay awake all night by completing some mathematical problems as revision for an impending exam. I would recommend this activity to anyone who finds themselves snoozing at the checkpoints and I can provide wonderful test papers if you so wish!

We had catered for 100+ competitors but in the event I believe we only served approximately 80, so we were well able to comply with Bryan Clarke's request for "double custard" on the crumble. I understand from some quarters that the potatoes were a little hard so I have passed this comment on to the chef who surprisingly welcomed the constructive criticism. Thanks are due to Tom Sinclair for the splendid donation of apples from his bumper crop.

Finally, I would exhort all new club members to become involved with check point duties. It is not only a way to pay back other clubs for all the hard work involved in organising events, it can have fringe benefits - Jim and I were able to pick up two spare entries for the Seven Sisters Marathon which were advertised at the finish checkpoint. This enabled us to compete in this marvellous event on what must have been the most glorious walking day of the year. (Many thanks to Ne3jO'Rourke for the entries).

Diane James

THE ELEVENTH BLACKWATER MARATHON - 1995

After the mild autumn weather it came hard to clean the frost from the car before setting off for Feering but the sunny crisp day which followed was ideal for walking. I'm told there were at least 17 Kent Group members at this year's walk and I'm sure they all had a great day. The route, checkpoints and marshals were superb. The walk itself was in flat countryside with several glimpses of the River Blackwater but none of the seawall mentioned on the certificate. However, the varied landscape of fields, villages and autumn-coloured trees added interest. The dry conditions of this year made the ground hard and there was quite a bit of "tarmac". The route description was mildly "iffy" in places, particularly in paragraph 18 where we were lucky visibility was good enough to see what we were aiming for as the compass bearings were confusing. (There seemed to be a sentence missing). At the end of the route description they look forward to seeing us again at the next walk in 1997.

Bryan Clarke

BRECON BEACONS WEEKEND 19/21 JANUARY 1996

For our fifth visit to South Wales our H.Q. will again be Danywenallt Study Centre, Talybont-on-Usk, Grid Reference, 107205. Recommended maps for the area include 1:50,000, 160 and 161 and Outdoor Leisure Series of the Brecon Beacons.

SCHEDULE

Friday 19 Assemble at Danywenallt 6.30 p.m. approx. for Buffet Supper at 8 p.m.
Saturday 20 Breakfast 8 a.m. Choice of hard or easier walk starting at 9 a.m. EVENING DINNER 6.30/7 p.m.
Sunday 21 Breakfast 8.30 a.m. followed by short social walk. Tea or coffee available before returning home.

PACKED LUNCHES ARE PROVIDED ON BOTH DAYS.

Please feel free to bring extra goodies, wine or beer etc. as this all adds to the convivial atmosphere.

COST OF PACKAGE £50 per person

Enquiries to: G.W.Barnett on [REDACTED] whom remittances should be sent, by 5th January 1996, at:

[REDACTED].
For those who can spare the time an extra bed & breakfast (DIY) will be available on Sunday night £10, payable at the Centre.

FRIDAY WALK (Forest of Dean)

This optional extra will again start from New Beechenhurst Car Park in the Forest of Dean on B4226 between Cannop and Speech House Hotel, car park entrance GR 613118 on O.S. Map 162. Refreshments may be obtained here before we start the walk at 11 a.m. SHARP. Lunch at the Fountain Inn, Parkend. Please let me know if you will be coming along.

Winter Hill-Walking is not to be undertaken lightly and your attention is therefore drawn to the following recommendations for clothing and equipment:-

Heavyweight waterproof jacket with hood, waterproof overtrousers, Waterproof boots with good, well-gripping soles, fleece or fibre pile jacket, a number of layers of Helly Hansen or similar underwear, woolly balaclava or hat, wind and waterproof gloves, map, compass, thermos flask (hot drink or soup), torch, whistle, survival bag, spare food (energy bars, chocolate), first aid kit. These are minimum requirements and are worth a mention because many people have been caught out by unexpected weather changes in the hills and mountains during this year.

Peter Barnett.

Towpath opens walking route from Coventry to Oxford.

Thus ran a headline of an article in the Rugby Observer of 22nd June 1995 about the opening of the 83-mile Oxford Canal Walk that month. Rugby and District Tourism Association should be able to provide more information to anyone who is interested. Thanks to my sister who sent me the newspaper cutting.

Tom Sinclair.

YORKSHIRE DALES HUNDRED, 25, 26 & 27 MAY 1996.

The Kent Group has been asked and has agreed to staff the kitchen and serve food and drinks at the finish which is at Settle High School and which we will need to staff from 10 a.m. on Sunday 26th to 10 a.m. on Monday 27th. We are planning to base our coverage on 4 shifts of 6 hours each with some longer to allow for setting up and clearing up and to provide overlaps. The proposed shift pattern, showing numbers needed at different times, is set out here:-

SUNDAY

4 people	9 a.m. - 4 p.m. (7 hours)
2 "	10 a.m. - 4 p.m. (6 hours)
2 "	3 p.m. - 9 p.m. (6 hours)
6 "	4 p.m. - 10 p.m. (6 hours)
2 "	9 p.m. - 3 p.m. (MONDAY) (6 hours)
6 "	10 p.m. - 4 a.m. (MONDAY) (6 hours)

MONDAY

4 people	3 a.m. - 10 a.m. (7 hours)
6 "	4 a.m. - 10 a.m. (6 hours)
2 "	5 a.m. - 11 a.m. (6 hours)

This gives us a total of 34 man/shifts so if we each do 2 shifts we will need 17 volunteers. Please contact me [redacted] to offer help, to tell me which shift(s) are most convenient for you - I will do my best to oblige - and to say if you would be interested in a group social walk over the last 12 miles of the '100' route on the Saturday (25th May).

Paul Hatcher.

'SEASON OF MISTS AND ACHING JOINTS'

That was the heading of an article by the medical correspondent of 'The Times' about Osteoarthritis which, he says is 'a degenerative disease of the joints'. The article is a bit technical in parts but I liked the following bits:-

" The advent of autumnal damp heralds the season of aching limbs and joints. This is the time of year when joints misused in youth..... often protest in middle or old age."

" It (osteoarthritis) is more common in the overweight in whom the knees rather than the hips are more likely to suffer."

" Physical idleness can no more protect people from osteoarthritis than wearing a hat can prevent them from going grey."

With acknowledgements to Dr. Thomas Stuttaford.

Another article, this time on Orienteering, carried the arresting heading " Running to catch the 8.15 while doing a crossword."

This apt description of orienteering made me think also of those runners on our events who seem to be able to read a route description, check a compass bearing and spot the next landmark all without breaking stride or pausing for breath.

That's all for now, folks. Material for the next issue, by 5.3.'96 please, to [redacted]

Tom Sinclair

STOP PRESS

GROUP SWEATSHIRTS AND POLO SHIRTS
The Committee is planning to order further supplies early in the New Year. Contact Dave Sheldrake on [redacted] to order yours.