

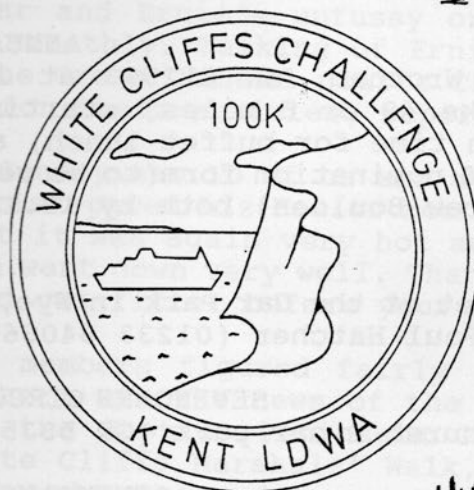


LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION

Kent Group

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

NEWSLETTER



Number 44

December 1997

COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN.....PAUL HATCHER [REDACTED]
SECRETARY - vacant post to be filled at AGM; in the meantime Neal
and Jan O'Rourke will appear in 'Strider' as our contact people.
TREASURER.....NEIL HIGHAM [REDACTED]

MEMBERS

TREVOR BLAKE [REDACTED] JIM ODDY [REDACTED]
NEAL O'ROURKE [REDACTED] TOM SINCLAIR [REDACTED]
KEITH WARMAN [REDACTED]

KENT GROUP PROGRAMME DECEMBER 1997 TO APRIL 1998

SUN DEC 28 1997 SHORT SOCIAL SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR
20 miles. Meet at Buckhurst 2 CP, GR533546 for 8 a.m.start. Pub
stop with food. Leader: Brian Buttifant ([REDACTED])

FRI JAN 9 1998 INVICTA NIGHT WALK
Approx 21 miles. Meet at "The Bush", Aylesford, 9.30 p.m. for a
10.30 p.m. start. Leader Ivan Waghorn ([REDACTED])

FRI/SAT/SUN JAN 16/17/18 1998 BRECON BEACONS WEEKEND
Leader: Peter Barnett [REDACTED] who may have a few places.

SUN JAN 25 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
St. George's Hall, Wrotham, GR 612593 at 2 p.m. preceded by
optional social walks (9 or 6 miles) starting at 9.30 a.m and
returning to Hall in time for buffet lunch, also optional, at 1
p.m. Notice, Agenda & nomination form(to be returned to Paul) and
booking form(to Andrew Boulden) both by 12.1.98. are enclosed.

SUN FEB 22 WYE WANDER
Approx, 20 miles. Meet at the Car Park in Wye, GR053468, for 8.30
a.m. start. Leader Paul Hatcher [REDACTED].

SUN MAR 1 SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR MARSHALS' WALKS
Meet 8 a.m. at Buckhurst 2 car park (GR 533546). Good support.

SUN MAR 15 SEVENOAKS CIRCULAR WALKS
HELP! More is needed because of clash with National AGM. Contact
Brian Buttifant [REDACTED]. 30 m. 8 a.m. start, 20 m. 10 a.m.

SUN 22 MAR EVERYWHERE BUT ELHAM
Approx. 20 miles. Meet in front of church at Elham, GR17438, for
8.30 a.m. start. Leader Neal O'Rourke [REDACTED]

SUN 26 APR SNEAKING INTO SUSSEX
22 miles. 8.15 a.m. sharp at Wittersham Church, GR 897269. Park
in road not Church C.P. Pub stop at Udimore, food available.
Leader Shirley Higgins [REDACTED]

MONTHLY MEETINGS are held on the first Monday of each month (if
that is a Bank Holiday postponed to 2nd Monday) at 'The
Provender', Pye Corner, Ulcombe, in odd months and at the 'Horse
and Groom', Wrotham Hill, A.20, in even months, from 8 p.m.

Dear Fellow Kent Group Members,

As I write this, on Michaelmas Day, Diane James is probably on her way to Shropshire to start a new job and my copy of the Kent Group programme, as sent to "Strider", will be dropping through my front door any day now. The loss of the Jameses will mean more jobs for other members of the committee, particularly Neal and Jan, who has been co-opted until the AGM - more of that anon. In the meantime if you have any walks/events for the programme from April 1998 onwards please let me (Tom S.) have them by Monday 12th January so that I can send details to "Strider" in good time. Also two handwritten articles have come through the post in the last week so it is time to start typing.

At the August pub meet I was sad to learn of the sudden death, in July, of Gordon Facer's wife, Jean, whom some of us had met at the Annual Lunch and/or supporting Gordon on challenge walks. We offer our sympathies to him and to Brian Russell whose mother died on the day of the High Weald Walk, 10th August.

The aforementioned High Weald Walk took place on a swelteringly hot day when the sun reflecting from an enormous field of stubble was especially energy-sapping and the cheerful checkpointers were even more appreciated than usual. The entries were up on last year and Ernie's unfussy organisation ensured that the event ran smoothly. Talking of Ernie my thanks to him for the report on the Cross Channel Cliffs Challenge and to all other contributors for their articles, reports, snippets etc.

The following Sunday saw 10 of us and a visitor from Essex group following a brisk-paced Liz Keeler round a lovely route in the Elham Valley but it was again very hot and the Tea in Liz's garden at the finish went down very well. Thanks, Liz, for a good walk; I must try and get fitter before your next one!

Kent Group and its members figured fairly prominently in the August "Strider". There was the news of the Millennium Hundred and the reports on the Shotley Peninsula Challenge, by Keith Warman, and the White Cliffs Marshals' Walk, by Brian Russell, both of which had already appeared in our Newsletter. As well as Bryan Clarke's photo of Don Newman which illustrated Brian's report (incidentally my own photo of Paul, Ivan and Brian was not available at the time and, besides, Don's beaming smile was a good advertisement for our event) I have spotted Peter Barnett, Jim James, Trevor Blake, Jan O'Rourke and Roger Thornburgh amongst the Downsman Hundred walkers and Pat and Bryan Clarke, Phil Betts and Diane James in the kitchen at the finish. Paul and Mary Hatcher are also identifiable (just) in Shirly Gill's photo of the "B" walk on Gibson Knott at the Keswick A.G.M.

We had 186 entries for the White Cliffs Challenge of whom 162 started; about 50 more than the highest numbers we have had on the Wealden Waters. See Shirley Hume's report on a later page.

Contributions for April issue by the first Monday in March, to:
Tom Sinclair, [REDACTED]

CROSS CHANNEL CLIFFS CHALLENGE

(Sat Jul 19)

In 1994 I, together with Brian Buttifant, Pat and Jackie Clay and a varied assortment of ramblers, footpath secretaries and K.C.C. officials, crossed the channel to walk in the Calais area with a similar group from France. The reason was to "celebrate" a joint venture between "local government" on both sides of the Channel in creating a London to Paris walking route.

At the time Brian and I speculated on the possibility of a cross-channel LDWA event, walking Folkestone - Dover and Calais - Boulogne and linking with ferries for the maritime sections. We weren't very serious because of the logistical problems and soon forgot it. So I was intrigued when I saw the Cross Channel Cliffs Challenge in the group programme. Somebody had summoned the energy to work out a route and solve the cross-channel problem. I was keen to sample it and see how it worked out. I felt less enthusiastic when the alarm went off at 2.45 a.m.

After an initial problem with a closed car park at the Hoverport had been resolved the group set off just after 4.30 a.m. from Dover Harbour under the leadership of Graham Smith. It turned out that he and other members from that area had already walked the route twice before, eliminating path-finding problems and solving timing difficulties on the channel crossings.

It was just getting light as we started in pleasant weather along the cliff path to Folkestone Harbour. We arrived with about an hour to spare before the 8.30 a.m. Seacat service - plenty of time for coffee and buns/croissants. We arrived in the bustling town of Boulogne in mid-morning (French time) and immediately turned North, taking the coastal route to Calais.

The route kept to the coast; the first few miles/kilometres being unremarkable. Some of the old war-time pill-boxes (gun emplacements) were still there, at least one, with washing hanging on the line, being occupied.

We reached a small seaside resort which, by the look of the facilities for children on the front, catered for family holidays. I always get the impression that the French don't travel much and are more likely to take their holidays "at home". We visited the "toilettes" which were manned (or rather womanned) and which were immaculate. This gave rise to a lot of comment, for many had previous experience of facilities in France, or in Britain for that matter, at the other end of the scale.

After a short distance we hit the sand dunes about which we had received advance warnings from those familiar with the route. Hard going but luckily for not too long. The route soon turned a little way inland to cross a river estuary and after a short road section reached a village. Most made for the bar/cafe where the first lager/second coffee of the day was consumed. I also took the opportunity to visit the boulangerie opposite for a couple of buns to supplement my rations.

From here after a short section of road we reached the cliff path leading to Cap Gris Nez; probably the best part of the walk. Before reaching there we had a lunch stop at a point with good views out to sea and on reaching the Cap we had another drink.

From the busy tourist spot we dropped down to sea level and then had five or six miles of sand walking. The tide was out so it was mainly hard sand and, of course, level walking. About half way, at Wissant, we reached a resort where some of us made use of the facilities to buy an ice cream. Those in the know saved their money for Cap Blanc Nez,

Down with the ice cream and back on the sands among the bucket and spade brigade. The crowds soon thinned and a mile or two before Cap Blanc Nez we had a short climb back on to the low cliffs to follow a path to the 'Cap'. Then came the stiffest climb of the day up to the top and another stop for refreshment. Don Newman made up for a lack of rations with a large dish of chips and those who had missed out on the ice cream at the earlier stop indulged themselves with what was probably the largest hand-held ice cream I've ever seen.

The party of bloated walkers turned inland from Cap Blanc Nez, fortunately downhill at first and then with a short climb to pick up the GR (Grande Randonnee) which crosses these small hills on a track towards Calais. The party soon split into small groups but there was no difficulty in finding the way to Coquelles. The rest of the party was already seated outside a cafe with suitable refreshments but fortunately the itinerary was designed with plenty of time for stops in mind. A two beer stop this one (French beers are, of course, about half a pint).

Then into Calais and out to the Hoverport. Not a very interesting section, the latter part being flat roads with industrial/commercial buildings, but no obvious way of avoiding it. After a wait for the Hovercraft we were transferred by bus to a different terminal and returned to Dover by the Super Seacat. A 35 minute trip from Calais to Dover Harbour was most impressive. A £5 fare for the return trip was even more impressive.

Although the round trip, including ferry crossings, was much longer, the walk itself was about 38 miles. A good day out, very well organised by Graham Smith and any others involved, which I thoroughly enjoyed. As I sank back into bed about 24 hours after getting up I was glad it wasn't any longer.

If you need any further information about the route etc. see Graham Smith's report in Newsletter No.41, December 1996.

ERNIE BISHOP

THE WELLINGTON BOOT 13/14 SEPTEMBER

by BRIAN RUSSELL

Ever since the instigation of this event I have been trying to do it. I even entered last year but had to cancel at the last minute. This year, however, my circumstances changed and I was finally able to look forward to a weekend in Somerset.

It seemed a good decision to travel down on the Friday evening: I soon found out why the M.25 is called Britain's biggest car park. I eventually reached Somerset about midnight. Trying to snatch a few hours sleep was difficult enough but I was rudely awakened at about 4 a.m. by thunder, lightning and torrential rain. After such a perfect week's weather were we going to have to walk 60+ miles in these conditions? I tried not to even think about it and went back to sleep.

It kept on spitting right up to the start when, miracle of miracles, it stopped and the sun came out. This put a totally different outlook on the event as, at 8.30 sharp, 130 hopefuls made their way out of Wellington heading towards the Quantock Hills standing up prominently in the far distance.

The route started out by crossing the "Vale of Taunton Deane", a pastoral scene of many fields and stiles. By lunchtime the Quantocks were reached and then our first stiff climb of the day to gain the main ridge. On reaching the Clipper Point at the top the most outstanding views greeted us:- to the North Bridgewater Bay and across to Wales with the Brecon Beacons and the Sugarloaf clearly visible, to the West the Brendon Hills (next to be crossed) with Exmoor beyond and to the South the Blackdown Hills with the 2000feet Wellington Monument looking very small indeed.

It was a shame to have to leave this tranquil scene but a fine ridge walk led us down to the next checkpoint before re-climbing the Quantocks, dropping down the other side and making progress towards the Brendon Hills. The climb down into the valley was very steep, literally taking all the strength out of my legs. This was serious as the next problem to negotiate was Clotworthy Reservoir which had to be reached by 7.30 p.m. in order to walk around it on the route proper as otherwise a locked gate would block the way. The alternative didn't bear thinking about as it involved a further three stiff climbs before rejoining the main route at the next checkpoint. With dusk starting to fall my strength suddenly returned and I managed to make the cut-off point with twenty minutes to spare.

With darkness upon us we had to recross the "Vale of Taunton Deane", our target being the Blackdown Hills and the Wellington Monument, now brilliantly lit by a mauve floodlight. There followed mile after tedious mile of field edges, stiles and compass bearings bringing us, eventually, to some relief with a stretch of canal towpath walking - although this seemed to go on for ever. After yet more fields to contend with after the checkpoint, dawn found us walking along the Blackdown Escarpment leading to the still floodlit Wellington Monument, built in honour of the great Duke himself.

A short drop down into Wellington brought us back to the start and a well-earned rest and breakfast. My personal time of just under 23 hours was more than satisfactory considering all the climbing that had been done.

Make no mistake: this is a tough but enjoyable walk given the ideal weather conditions which prevailed, enabling everyone to appreciate the superb scenery. Anything less and it would be quite miserable. Also I found the continuous negotiation of fields, field edges, compass bearings and clipper points at night extremely tedious and strength-sapping - and with very wet feet to boot! (pun intended). The one factor that sways the walk in its favour is the outstanding way that Cornwall/Devon Group feed and fuss over you. The food is more than abundant with a very wide menu of home-made sandwiches, cakes, pastries, salads, a hot meal at half way and a breakfast at the finish. Also 5 of the 7 checkpoints are under cover; a veritable blessing if the weather should be inclement.

After someone else's report on the 1996 event there has been talk of it folding due to lack of entrants which would be a shame. If you get a chance do go and do it, have an enjoyable weekend in beautiful surroundings and help to keep this event in the walking calendar.

BRIAN RUSSELL

BRECON BEACONS WEEKEND 16 - 18 JANUARY 1998

Based at Danywenallt Study Centre, Talybont-on-Usk, GR107205. Recommended maps for the area include 1:50,000 160 & 161 and Outdoor Leisure Series of the Brecon Beacons.

Schedule

Friday 16th	Assemble at Danywenallt 6 p.m. onwards for Buffet Supper at 8 p.m.
Saturday 17th	Breakfast 8 a.m. Commence walk at 9 a.m. Choice of hard or not so hard walk. (Not to mention the gentle stroll for the lame, sick and idle).
Sunday 18th	Breakfast 8.30 a.m. followed by short social walk. Tea or coffee available at Centre before returning home in the afternoon.

Packed lunches are provided on both days.

COST OF PACKAGE £56 to be paid by 2nd January 1998. Cheques to be made out to: G.W.BARNETT.

On the Sunday night an extra bed and breakfast (DIY) will be available for a charge of £10 (pay at Centre).

FRIDAY WALK

This optional extra will start from New Beechenhurst Car Park GR 513118 on B2446 in the Forest of Dean at 10.30 a.m. Essential pub stop, with hot food available, will be included.

Enquiries and firm bookings to: Peter Barnett on [REDACTED]

THE HIGH WEALD WALK - A FEW WARM MEMORIES by SHIRLIE GILL

It was way back in July when, with a dozen other marshals I set out from the Camden Arms Car Park in Pembury to check the route details for the High Weald main event to be held in August.

It was a glorious, sunny, clear blue sky'd day and Keith Warman and I began the walk in cheerful mood and mode. Our chattering to friends at peaceful ease as we entered Pembury Old Churchyard was suddenly cut short when Tom the Editor decided to try his hand at 'surprise, surprise' photography and leapt out at us from behind a grand old yew tree. We managed to calm our beating hearts, blinked away multiple "red-eye" and bid Tom a fond farewell.

In no time at all we arrived at Checkpoint 1 in Somerhill House Car Park where we were fed and watered, We did not stop long - the bit was between our teeth (obstructing osculation, Ed.) - and we put a few more miles under our trailbusters. Someone jogged past us and admitted to "taking a few wrong turns" but, luckily, soon found his way back on the trail again, and again, and again!

By now the day was warming up and the countryside seemed to uncurl its splendour before us and for us. I wanted to linger but, needs must and all that, so on we marched and suddenly we were at Saracen's Yard, the Speldhurst Checkpoint. I sat on the grass bank and watched a few sleepy ducks on the water nearby. I tore myself away and set off with bun in hand to eat "on the hoof" - and to hell with the indigestion!

I was looking forward to going through the grounds at Groombridge Place (my first visit). I was impressed by its size and amazed at the number of cars there - apparently an event was being staged so the place was thronged with visitors. We caused a few curious glances as we strode through trying to look as if we knew exactly which bridge we were meant to cross.

We left the cars and the crowds behind us as we reached the Recreation Ground for our next refreshment stop. It was extremely pleasant sitting under an old oak tree and snatching 5 minutes' rest. However, the heat was steadily increasing and beginning to take its toll. We decided a steady pace would suffice and thoroughly enjoyed the track through Eridge Woods and Park. We stopped for a quick drink by the huge tree at the gate in the deer fencing. I wondered how many people had walked beneath its massive boughs over the hundreds of years it had stood there.

It was not far now to Frant and the last Checkpoint. It was a welcome sight and such a picturesque setting with the afternoon sun playing on the green. We stayed longer than intended in the shade of the checkpoint tree. Comfy chairs, tranquil setting, marshals oozing sympathy, de-trailbusted sore feet: it was quite an effort to say farewell and face the open road but we did and knew we had just a short while left to enjoy the beautiful scenery on such a splendid walk. We eventually hove into the car park at Pembury and those already there (and those soon to come) were all smiles - a true testament to a thoroughly good day out.

LA GRANDE TRAVERSEE DES ALPES - STAGE 2

On September 2nd there was a reunion at Waterloo Station for the seven people who had walked the first stage of the alpine section of the GR5 in July last year. After travelling on three trains we arrived at Modane in time for breakfast the following morning. Last year we walked from Lake Geneva to Modane, now we were ready to head south for two weeks to Nice.

The first day was overcast and sultry, but after that, apart from one morning when we had a thundery shower, it was hot and sunny all the time. I didn't find the heat too troublesome. After the humid Kent weather in August the air seemed pleasantly fresh.

I had been warned that I might find the second half of the walk disappointing. In fact it was quite the reverse. We didn't have the close up views of glaciers and snow covered mountain peaks but I found the scenery much more varied than last year and the geology was fascinating.

On the descent to the river Claree there were strange tall pillars of yellowish rock standing out above the pine trees. It seemed like a landscape from a fairy tale. Ascending beside a torrent from the hamlet of Roya I noticed narrow bands of pink rock on the other side of the water. In some places the bands were fractured into small regular shapes like bricks. Later the same day we climbed through huge boulders towards the Col de Croussette. This was wild, barren country with towering grey rock faces and vast scree slopes. Another day we walked to the village of Rimplas on an amazing path that had been blasted from the hillside through rocks of many colours - black, grey, pink, red, yellow and even green.

There were a couple of complete surprises on the route. The approach to Col de Fromage was totally unexpected, across an eroded landscape with dramatic ridged valleys plunging away to our right. The col remained hidden until the last minute. The ascent to the Brec d'Utelle was breathtaking. We climbed steeply, twisting and turning through huge rocks, towards a ridge. Often it seemed there was no way ahead for the path to go. Suddenly there was a narrow gap in the crags, then we were through, enjoying magnificent views ahead.

Lakes are ideal places to pause for a drink or a picnic. The man-made Lac de Roue is a large tranquil stretch of water surrounded by forest. We sat for a while by the gently lapping water, admiring the reflections of distant peaks. One morning we passed Le Lac de Pres Sebeyrand in a grassy depression. The water was a dark mossy green colour and there were dragonflies skimming across the surface. Soon after this the route took us through a chaos of boulders to the brilliant turquoise blue Lac Saint Anne, situated at the base of jagged cliffs with lingering patches of snow. On a very hot day we had our picnic near Le Lac de Lauzanier. The surrounding hills and shimmering heat spread a patchwork of pastel colours across the surface.

I was pleasantly surprised to find many wild flowers still in bloom. Drifts of pink dianthus, knapweed, campanula, and autumn crocus were seen throughout the route. A few isolated spring gentians were still in bloom near the cols. As we left Utelles on our last morning the hillside was covered with michaelmas daisies. During the second week our walk was accompanied by the aromatic smell of thyme and marjoram as we trod on the herbs and the scent of wild lavender as we brushed against the plants.

Marmots were a common sight. They are especially tame in the Mercantour National Park. Guns are not allowed there so they have come to trust people. We would see whole families chasing about in grassy areas or sometimes we would spot a little face peeping out from a hole in the rocks watching our progress.

During the first few days wheatears and redstarts were our constant companions, flying beside the path. In the valleys there were many dark headed tits perching in the bushes and finches crossing our path with their dancing flight. Several times we heard the raucous screech of jays and saw the flash of brilliant colours.

Lizards basked in the sunshine, well camouflaged on the rocks, and grass snakes slithered into the undergrowth. The warm weather and the heady scent of flowers brought out the butterflies, particularly marbled white, fritillaries, clouded yellows and meadow browns.

Our accommodation was in refuges, gites d'etape or logis de France. We stayed in some very attractive villages. Plampinet, by the river Claree, is a delightful mixture of neglected, decaying properties and others that have been restored and brightened up with tubs of flowers. Roure, a mountain village perched on the mountainside above the Tinee valley, was our favourite. It is a place of warm red roofs, mellow stone houses, paved alleyways, small, bright gardens and tiny vegetable patches. One evening as we approached the village of Brunissard we saw a colourful wedding party celebrating on the hillside. After we were settled in the gite a cavalcade of cars drove past with lights flashing, horns blaring and fireworks exploding. They were not popular when they returned at 4 a.m. with just as much noise! One night in the first week we stayed in the old part of Briançon, a fortified city with lovely old buildings, smart shops and narrow, cobbled streets. There were interesting sundials on many of the buildings, some very ornate and some quite plain. The inscriptions were in Latin or French. Sundials are a special feature of this part of France and we noticed them in all the towns and villages.

This part of the GR5 is well maintained and waymarked. We passed someone painting fresh red and white stripes on the rocks and later we saw posts being put in ready for new waymarks. All the paths were safe and secure in the fine, dry weather, some would be difficult in snow or poor visibility. For much of the second week we were following an old mule track which had a comforting sense of permanence.

I shall remember the route as one of contrast and variety. One particular day stands out in my mind to illustrate this: We had spent the night in the village of Beuil and to regain the GR5 we had to walk up a river bed over large, rounded stones. After joining the GR5 at the Col des Moulines we were soon walking through a landscape of eroded rocks sculpted into weird shapes. There were tempting glimpses of tunnels and caves. Suddenly we were in an enormous, flat, alpine pasture which seemed to go on for ever. After lunch at a refuge we dropped down on a steep path above a gorge with waterfalls. We walked through woodland adorned with many kinds of coloured fungi before emerging into a meadow full of clover and cranesbill, where we sat in warm sunshine among the ruined barns of Rougios. Next we entered a green world of larches and lichens. Everything looked green, even our suntanned limbs! A broad forest track, fragrant with the smell of freshly-felled timber, led to an ancient paved track leading to Roure through sweet chestnut trees and lush vegetation. A day to remember and a holiday to remember.

SHIRLEY HIGGINS.

HOLIDAY WALKING ACCOMMODATION

Having lately received a leaflet from Paul about the accommodation he and Mary stayed at in Wales it occurred to me that it might be a good idea to keep a database of recommended holiday stays from members of the Kent Group. They should be places where people have actually stayed, be happy to give houseroom to walkers and put up with them being wet, muddy, scruffy, etc. and have drying facilities. An up-to-date list could then be included in the Newsletter. It would also be a good idea if the keepers of the database weren't Bryan and I! There must be someone in the Kent group, preferably someone relatively uninvolved in organising walks, etc., who wouldn't mind doing this. Volunteers please rush to the 'phone or your notepad and contact the Editor with your offers!

PAT CLARKE.

Thanks for the idea, Pat, but I wonder what people are going to offer me! I wonder, too, about the Newsletter appearing to carry commercial advertising but perhaps enclosing a list could be seen as an extension of the "word-of-mouth" passing on of useful information which already happens. What does anyone else think of the suggestion?

Tom S.

WHITE PEAK HUNDRED

This year Kent Group will be manning a checkpoint at BONSALL VILLAGE HALL (1 mile East of Matlock Bath). This will be 35 miles into the walk and will be open from 5 p.m. on Saturday 23rd May to 12.30 a.m. on Sunday 24th May. (HURRAH! we're not doing the meal at the finish again. Ed.) Please let me know as soon as possible if you are able to help. This will enable those of us who would like to do the main event to enter the Marshals' Walk if there are not enough people for a full team without us.

PAUL HATCHER.

THE JOYS OF HIKING

Over the last few years we have managed to accumulate a few books on the whys and wherefores of walking in the 1920s and 30s. Until then walking was done of necessity by the ordinary people (to whose ranks I am assuming most of Kent Group belong!). There were always those with more leisure or money who took excursions into the country - the poets and even some nobility.

I read an article recently of an excursion on to one of the fells in the Lake District by a couple of Lords and their Ladies. The Ladies were mounted on ponies and had several panic attacks necessitating smelling salts during the excursion. Public transport, disillusionment with working conditions in the towns and a little more leisure began to tempt people into the country and several guide books were published.

On one of those very wet days in the Lake District when the fells were almost completely blotted out we were pottering in a dirty, cramped, but very interesting, little antique-cum-secondhand shop in a backstreet when I came across this gem of a book published by Phillip's Rubber Soles and Heels. It is part 1 of two volumes. Apparently volume 2 contains details of walks. I wonder if anyone has it?

My little volume originally cost 1/- (5p to the youngsters among us!) although it cost me a whole pound. Called "The Great Outdoors" it is a book for Ramblers, Hikers, Campers and all open-air people. It is from this little book that I am about to educate you on the necessities for a day's Hike or even for a few days away.

By way of introduction Rambler tells us that walking in the country by footpath, bridleway and along the by-lanes is the real Out o'Doors. On the other hand W.A Hurst in "Rambles in the Home Counties" (1927) says that the high road is best of all because villages and churches are along it and it doesn't become knee-deep in mud like footpaths.* Maybe he has something there. He admits that some people object to them because of the nuisance of motor cars but that except for weekends these roads are perfectly safe and quiet. Things have definitely changed.

*(Footpaths do become knee-deep in mud but in Kent, at least, they provide a much pleasanter link between churches and villages than the hard high road). Editor.

There is advice on clothing: "Wear easy fitting, old and showerproof garments as light and as warm as possible. Outfitters stock a wonderful variety of khaki and neutral-tinted shirts and shorts for the hiker and in settled hot weather these are to be recommended". However, in our fickle climate, Rambler's fancy is for a light jacket made of hairy surface tweed, flannel trousers, thin woollen underclothes and thick woollen stockings or socks. "Mackintoshes are heavy and a tweed jacket is adequate for anything but an exceptional downpour". All that steaming wool must have smelt delightful in enclosed places!

But I musn't forget the ladies as recommended in "A Hiking We Will Go" (Girls' Own, 1937). "So many girls have taken to shirts and shorts and even long flannel trousers (shock, horror!) that these seem to have become almost standard costume, but if only we could see ourselves as others see us, some of us might feel inclined to set our own fashion and thereby command respect. You will look doubly attractive in a well-cut sensible skirt and pretty sports shirt of becoming colour". A pair of lisle stockings and sensible shoes complete this outfit.

We come now to the all-important footwear (we're back to Rambler). "Many ramblers overdo the boot business. You see them start off for the country in heavily-nailed, clumsy boots that are a handicap to easy walking." What you need of course, as I am quoting from a book published by Phillip's Rubber Soles & Heels, is a comfortable pair of boots or shoes with leather and rubber soles. "This ideal system of leather and rubber has been brought to perfection by the Phillip's system in which thin, light yet durable rubber soles are securely welded to leather-soled shoes by a special adhesive that was the result of six years' research by Phillips". These would apparently keep your feet dry and comfortable. I well remember rubber soles which inevitably came unstuck and flapped at the toe edge as one walked; after which steel studs were added by my dear old Gramps. But perhaps he didn't use the right adhesive.

Further advice on rucksacs very sensibly recommended waterproof ones for about 4s. 11d. (24p roughly) "because it is extremely dangerous to have wet blankets". Some people prefer sleeping bags weighing about 2lb. and costing around 14s. 9d. (expensive these at 74p especially when people earned between 10s and £1. 10s. a week.

There is lots of other advice. I particularly like the bit about bed and breakfast at country inns. "My own experience is that you should reckon to pay about 5/6 to 7/- for bed and breakfast, 3/- for lunch, 1/6 for tea or say 11/- per day'. (1/- = 5p).

One of our other little books was published for Southern Railways and has lots of sepia photos of ladies clad in their sensible skirts and shoes. Interestingly, although the author, S.P.B. Mais, is male, all the photos are of females! It isn't dated but is presumably from the 1920s and contains Southern Rambles for Londoners, price sixpence. We paid £3.50 for that. I wondered whether Connex South-East might be interested in publishing a similar guide and providing convenient weekend trains too. Alas it seems unlikely!

It would be interesting to step back in time for a day and to see how different some of our well-known Kentish places were. Several of the Southern Rambles were in Kent of which more on another occasion.

PAT CLARKE.

(NO) SENSE OR SENSIBILITY

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a happily married couple in possession of two good (?) pairs of trainers must be in want of a 100km. challenge walk. Could this be why (with apologies to Miss Austen) we felt moved to enter the White Cliffs Challenge at almost the earliest opportunity. (It seemed like a good idea at the time m'lud, the defendant pleaded at her trial).

With numbers 4 & 5 we promptly forgot about actually having to do the event until my sister reminded me that it was time for our annual October visit. Almost driving to Tunbridge Wells by mistake we still made it to Wye in plenty of time to dither about when to start. Looking at the checkpoint opening times we felt we were unlikely to threaten any of them if we set off at 10 a.m., but we spent so much time chatting that it was 10.20 a.m. before we finally got away.

It was hot (I put that in just in case you hadn't noticed). What is it about Kent Walks - either you boil to death or have to pack a snorkel as part of your emergency gear? By the time we got to the number and mug check at 3.5km I was beginning to have serious misgivings about the whole enterprise, but having managed to consume between us the entire contents of my water bottle and persuaded Chris to carry one of my torches (the heavy one!) I felt much better (although I am resigned to no Christmas present again this year).

The route to Dover offered marvellous views and an interesting encounter with a couple of illegal zeppelins, hiding in the undergrowth beyond Capel-Le-Ferne, hoping to avoid detection. We asked to see their torches but they refused to comply so hopefully were disqualified from the event.

The route through Dover was busy with tourists/weekenders and we were concerned to read in the 'Times' on Monday about the influx of 180 asylum seekers in Dover over the weekend. There were about 180 entries for the WCC.....! On reflection we decided that if they had meant us the paper would have said '180 people FROM the asylum!

It was inevitable that the next section would be up, but it wasn't as bad as expected and at least the checkpoint was at the top of the hill rather than the bottom. After St. Margaret's Bay (who put those steps there?) not only did the route get easier but the temperature started to drop a bit so we felt refreshed for the second half.

I don't know who ordered the full moon, but it couldn't have been a better night for walking and the faultless route description meant that even the Humes couldn't get lost. Our only error occurred on leaving Shalmsford Street when we were chatting so hard we walked straight past the Stour Valley Centre without noticing.

After a lot of speculation over why somebody would want to store their bricks in a cupboard, never mind dump the cupboard in a field in the middle of nowhere, we eventually reached the delights of Canterbury on a Saturday night. What can I say? At least Tonbridge is smaller!

I do have a tip for lone females trying to scare off potential drunken molesters: Wait until they are close behind you, swing round with your halogen-bulbed headtorch aimed straight between their eyes and watch them run. (Do, however, be prepared to administer first aid if they should pass out in fright).

So, how did it compare to the Wealden Waters? The checkpoints are fantastic on both (though I did miss my sausages at Bough Beech), same friendly people and I thoroughly approved of the breakfast at the finish. (Can I please book a course of lessons with your egg scrambler?). Route description was spot on, which for a first year is quite an achievement, and the scenery well worth the trip (and the blisters, cramp etc.).

I think we would put the two as a dead heat and we enjoyed both (sad people that we are). What about alternate years? Wherever you are next year we will be there and we are already looking forward to the Millennium Hundred.

I am writing this on Friday 24 October with a really desperate head cold - I doubt if I could stagger round if the event was being held tomorrow - so I'm pleased it didn't strike last week. Thanks for all the kind enquiries - yes we did enjoy the novelty of going round together for the first time in three years.

Thanks from both of us to everyone who gave up their time to make the event such a success and to make everyone feel so welcome. Hope to see you all soon and definitely next year if not before.

SHIRLEY HUME (with permission of Chris)
Bristol and West Home for the Terminally Bewildered.

Thanks to Shirley (and Chris) for that report and to Bryan Clarke who asked Shirley to write it. Appreciative letters have reached Paul from Jonathan Lewin of London, George & Annie Foot (Devon & Cornwall) and Les Maple (National Secretary). George praised, inter alia, the route planning and the food, saying:- "Other highlights were the two meals. At Shepherdswell we had the best meal I can remember on a walk. The vegetarian option was quite delicious, the vegetables with it nice and crunchy and the jelly/trifle made an excellent sweet. All served with remarkable efficiency. Again at the finish excellent service and a really good breakfast". Les Maple, who had to retire at Shepherdswell due to a torn calf muscle and a recent bout of 'flu, said:- "The main reason for writing is to ask you to convey my thanks to all the marshals and helpers who assisted on that walk - thanks also for the encouragement I received, without which I doubt if I would have got as far as I did. It is always a pleasure for me to renew friendship with the Kent Group and its members and they didn't let me down this time either".

Editor.

FOUNDERS JUBILEE CHALLENGE - 26th October 1997

A light frost and early morning wispy mist gave way to the most idyllic autumn day for the London Group's inaugural event based at Peaslake, in the Surrey hills.

Shirlie and I had confidently put our clocks forward, not back. the previous evening so our 5 o'clock alarm went off two hours early. Such is life.

This 25-mile circular route, devised by Tony Youngs of Surrey Group, is an undulating perambulation through woodland and heathland in central Surrey and includes one ascent of the North Downs. It was based on the route of Fouders' Footpaths, instigated to commemorate the LDWA's 25th anniversary by linking five sites associated with its founding by Alan Blatchford and Chris Steer.

When we arrived one parked car in the Hurtwood car park at Peaslake seemed to have its engine still running and I became concerned as no-one appeared to be in attendance. Closer inspection, however, revealed one Brian Russell, out to the world in the driver's seat in reclining mode. I'm sure it was the rumbling engine I could hear, or was it Brian snoring....?

Peaslake Memorial Hall proved a comfortable venue with Class 1 toilets. At the start, Vice President Barbara Blatchford (member number 3) gave a warm welcome to the 120 starters. I spied few other folk daring to wear shorts as I did, but the day's warmth soon justified my reckless dawn decision to allow my legs their probable final airing for 1997.

In the company of many familiar faces (and their attached bodies) Shirlie and I set off in the bright early morning up to the toposcope on Pitch Hill (erected by the Hurtwood Control) which reads: "In affectionate memory of Alan Blatchford (1936-1980) and Chris Steer (1919-1992) Founders of the LDWA". After the tarred windmill on Reynards Hill we were soon looking down Jelley's Hollow, the scene of many night-time encounters on the Surrey Summits (of mud, hidden rocks, running water and more mud).

Sandy tracks soon led us, in the company of Jean Dunton, Brian Haigh, Shirley Higgins and Laurie Lowe, to the drinks point on Farley Heath. After Blackheath we passed through Albury, where a careering car very nearly spelt retirement for the group of us, probably into the nearest A & E. Suitably refreshed at Checkpoint I (Shere Heath) our splendid sixsome cracked on through Shere and Abinger Hammer to a massed woodland comfort stop below the dauntingly-sunbathed Blatchford Down. The National Trust so named this area of scarp and ridge in 1982 and the steep diagonal ascent soon had us all puffing heavily.

The North Downs Way was then followed for a short while, allowing glorious views towards the Greensand ridge and beyond. Past Dunley Farm (and tea room) Shirlie and I found ourselves alone striding through the wide grassy glades of Ranmore Common with the speckled woods displaying a full range of autumnal tints.

Checkpoint 2 was at Tanner's Hatch Youth Hostel where a seat dedicated to Alan Blatchford sits invitingly beneath the spread of a huge yew. Meandering onwards, we passed a sort of woodland mummings' play for children with a large audience before reaching Ranmore Common car park (gasp! it's now pay and display!). We paused to inspect a North Downs Way shelter constructed from rustic timber, which contained an information board and an LDWA plaque. The downland scarp below was named Steer's field by the National Trust in 1994 and it provided our access to a rather steep drop through mature beeches and horse chestnuts. The chalk on the descent was very slippery in places and, at one point I had to stop to save an out-of control Shirlie plummeting in a cloud of fallen leaves.

Field paths and quiet lanes led us on to the hamlet of Ludmore Green. Two deceptively sharp rises and drops then took us to Friday Street and Checkpoint 3 in the busy car park. Amidst the afternoon sunshine we followed a winding path through lichen-clad silver birches to reach Abinger Common. An enclosed path led to a wide grassy ridge at the end of which we plunged down a vicious drop to the outskirts of Holmbury St. Mary.

Two further miles of woodland, passing a secretive pond, brought us back to the rooftops of Peaslake. The late afternoon stillness was captured as if on a photograph with vertical smoke rising from the chimneys of cottages into the vivid blue above. In the village centre we passed the old Post Office (now a pet provisions shop) where, in 1966, Chris Steer saw a small notice reading "Tanner's Marathon - 30 miles in 10 hours. Write to Alan Blatchford". He did, and so began their association, which culminated with the founding of the LDWA in 1972.

A warm welcome and light refreshments awaited us at the finish. London Group provided good support, and I hope they will consider staging this event on an annual basis. Apart from the LDWA historical connection, it is a superb route and would be a worthy addition to the event calendar.

This route, as "Founders' Footpaths" (and with a couple of minor changes), can be undertaken as an Anytime Challenge Walk with a certificate available for purchase for completions in less than 10 hours. Details and a route description can be obtained free by sending a large, stamped, addressed envelope to Ann Sayer at [REDACTED] Shirlie and I agreed it was one of the most enjoyable walks we have done, so we recommend it very highly!

KEITH WARMAN.

SOME SNIPPETS FROM THE CLARKES

Phil Betts seems to have recovered from his "Triple Troubles" of 1997. He recovered from the 'flu' bug which stopped his Brecon Beacons weekend and has booked for next year; he has another car after the Eastbourne incident and has recuperated from his fall, returning to walking by taking part in the Blackwater Marathon.

BRYAN CLARKE.

THE BLACKWATER MARATHON

We entered the fifteen mile version of this event though Pat was not quite sure she was fit enough for the distance. When we arrived at Maldon Football Club with our brother-in-law, John, we discovered from the information displayed that it was now sixteen miles! We took two hours to walk to the first checkpoint at six miles and almost two and a half hours to do the six miles to the next checkpoint. The last four miles were done in one hour twenty minutes. We quickly came to the opinion that the real distance was around seventeen miles!! However, we both finished in reasonably good condition. My knee trouble was no trouble (does that make sense?) while Pat had a blister but was very pleased with completing the walk. The weather was perfect with blue skies and a light cool breeze. The route was varied with woods, fields and paths along the riverside, towpath and seawall. We saw a few Kent Group members there including Phil Betts, Keith Warman, Shirley Higgins and Laurie Lowe plus ex-member Anitra Harper from Aldeburgh.

PAT & BRYAN CLARKE.

ANOTHER WEE BIT OF WEAVERS' WAY

While Jenny and I were spending a few days with friends in Norfolk in early November I decided it would be a good idea to sample another stretch of this LDP (56 miles from Cromer to Great Yarmouth). Our kind host, Alan, diverted en route to his clarinet lesson and deposited me outside the "Saracen's Head", Calthorp, to start my walk. Half a mile south on a bridleway soon brought me to the point where I had left the Weavers' Way about a year before but the waymark looked different. However, the path was clear, stiles and footbridges were in good condition and there was even a wooden walkway to keep one's trainers out of the fen.

Walking through the grounds of Blickling Hall (probable birthplace of Anne Boleyn), with cattle grazing to the left towards the lake and geese feeding on my right, I soon discovered that the Weavers' Way had been diverted at some time during the intervening year: I had not been on it at all until that point!

The track led me to a lane which passed the Buckinghamshire Arms but I paused only to admire the heraldic pub sign which carried the motto: "Auctor Pretiosa Fecit" or "The author/creator makes pretty/precious things". I avoided a short stretch of tarmac on a "B" road by going through the churchyard of St. Andrew's Church, Blickling, and looked into the church.

Soon I was engrossed in the Vicar's letter in the Parish Mag.! It's theme was hidden talents and it told me about one James Harmer, a devout labourer, who used to go into the woods to pray (to avoid the mockery of his workmates) and, on being found there by some patrolling soldiers during the First World War was arrested on suspicion of being a spy. He was about to be court-martialled and, in all probability, shot when the C.O., hearing the tale in the mess summoned young Harmer and, believing his story to be genuine engaged him as his batman.

After the war he became the Brigadier's personal servant and travelled with him to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). There Harmer discovered a gift for languages, learning several dialects of Sinhalese and even translating the Bible into that tongue!

The wartime theme persisted for just after I left the Church I spotted an old Anderson brick air-raid shelter buried, as they were, at the roadside. I went on through the hamlet of Silvergate and on well-marked paths across farmland before joining a disused railway track. The Way kept mostly to the old railway from here (West of Aylsham) to North Walsham, my destination for the day.

The gently-rising old railway track had a good surface and was tree-lined for most of the way but I did get some good views, particularly of Framlingham Church which kept appearing, first on the port bow at about 11 a.m. to my noon line of travel, then at 10 and finally 9 a.m. or, reverting to nautical terms, on the port beam. Hereabouts I spotted a Nissan Hut so the wartime theme recurred. I heard later there are many such huts in the area.

I was soon in the outskirts of North Walsham where Jenny had agreed to meet me in the car park behind the church at 2 p.m. my E.T.A. As I walked round the church Jenny entered the churchyard by the path leading from the car park! A short drive and a quick shower & change were followed by an excellent lunch and a reasonably well-earned (over 13 miles) siesta. Tom S.

SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

MON 12 JANUARY 1998 Last day for AGM nominations (Paul),
AGM lunch (25.1.98) bookings (Andrew),
social walks April 1998 onwards (Tom).

SUN 25 JANUARY 1998 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING IN WROTHAM

SAT, SUN. MON, 23, 24, 25 MAY 1998 THE WHITE PEAK HUNDRED
Paul needs your help on the Checkpoint - see page 11.

SUN 9 AUG 1998 THE HIGH WEALD SUMMER WALK
Ernie Bishop [REDACTED] will need Marshals.

SAT/SUN 10/11 OCTOBER THE WEALDEN WATERS WALK
Neal O'Rourke [REDACTED] will need Marshals.

You will have noticed, by now, that this issue carries no photographs. This is for a number of reasons. Amongst them was the photo I was offered of two dogs on their leads with Laurie Lowe at the other end which, I felt, would overstrain the credibility of this publication. Another reason was that no-one produced the pictures of Jean Dunton and Jacquie Clay outside a succession of public conveniences which would have so admirably illustrated a report (if anyone had written one) on Tom Bowman's Wantsum Miles Walk. Tom S.

P.T.O. FOR STOP PRESS

THE MILLENNIUM HUNDRED

At an inaugural meeting on 15 November Paul introduced Avril Stapleton, our link person on the National Committee and gave brief descriptions of the various jobs listed on the Agenda. It was understood that some members unable to attend had already expressed interest. During a tea break those present (27) indicated their interest, either in a leading or supporting role, on a paper listing the jobs including some added ones. After Keith Warman had reported on the response received in advance and from those present jobs were filled as follows:-

Chairman/Organiser	Paul Hatcher
Deputy Organiser	Trevor Blake
Secretary	Keith Warman
Treasurer	Neil Higham
Entries Secretary	Pam Prince
Results Secretary	Bryan and Pat Clarke
Marshals' Walk Organiser	Neal O'Rourke
Checkpoint Staffing	Tom Sinclair and David Sheldrake
Route Editor	Keith Warman
Catering	Paul Hatcher
Communications	Brian Butifant
Transport	Trevor Blake and Jim Oddy
Safety & First Aid	Ernie Bishop
Administration	Andrew Boulden
Liaison Officer	Brian Buttifant
Publicity & Sponsorship	Keith Warman
Merchandise	Kevin & Jackie Puttock
Badges and Certificates	Nick Dockree
HQ Controller	Tom Bowman

Paul emphasised that all the jobs were subject to ratification by the Group Committee and that, with few exceptions, the job holders would be team leaders who would enlist help from those who had offered and would offer help in the above jobs. Depending on the different talents of those coming forward, people listed above might be asked (in a few cases) to divert to other jobs.

In addition to the jobs mentioned it was suggested that a booklet about places of historical, architectural or other interest on or near the route, would be useful and could augment funds. Roger Thornburgh was invited to undertake the job and accepted.

It was a fruitful meeting but it was only the start and there will be a steady build up from now on. One early priority will be writing, in a consistent style, a description of a 100 mile route which is at present only a line drawn on a map and is likely to change. Offers to draft descriptions of 20-mile sections to Keith Warman [REDACTED], PLEASE. Designs for badges, certificates, sweatshirts etc. will be needed - details of a competition in next issue but sharpen pencils NOW.

More of the Millennium Hundred and lots of other interesting topics at the A.G.M. on 25 January 1998. See you there! Last day for contributions to the April Newsletter: 2nd March 1998.

Tom S.