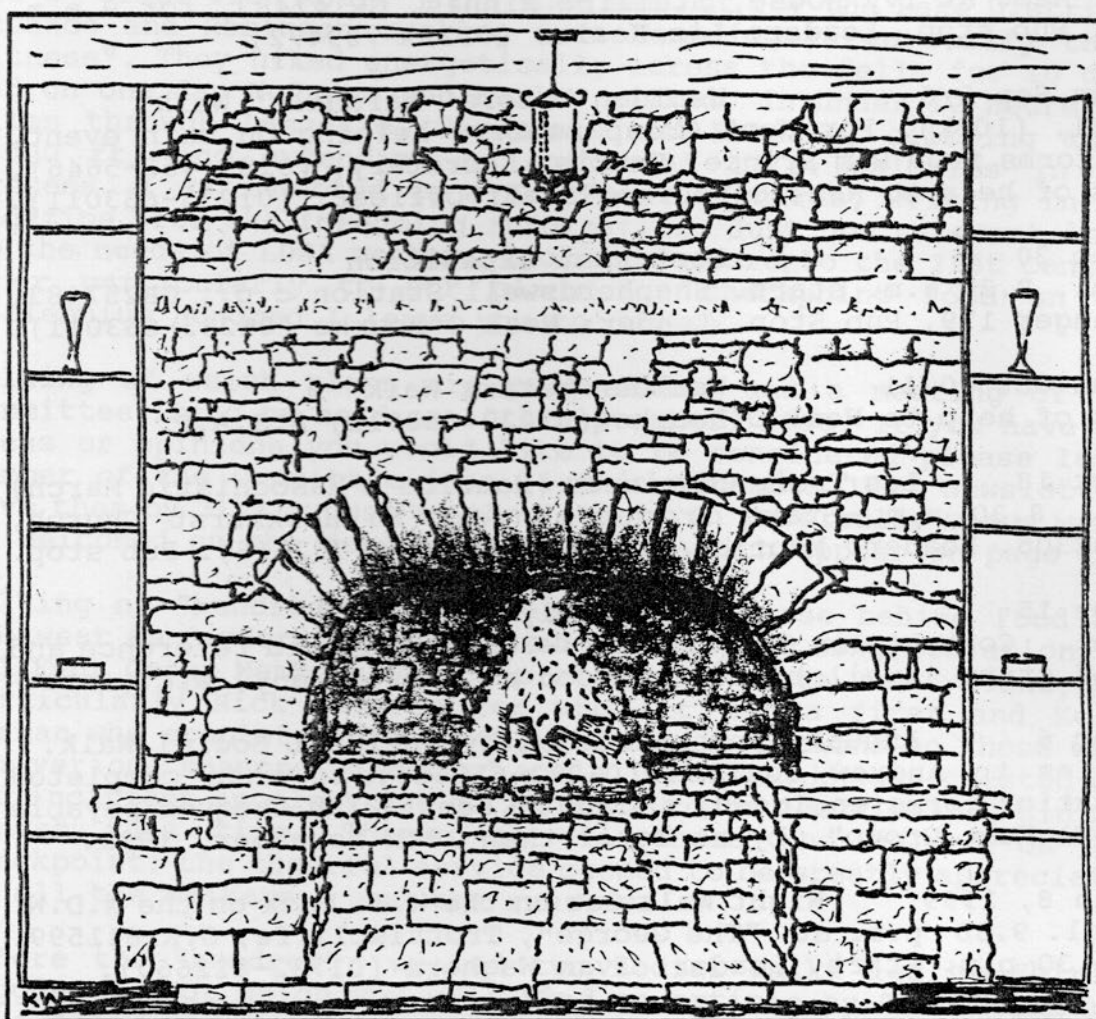




LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION *Kent Group*

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

NEWSLETTER



Number 46

August 1998

COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN.....PAUL HATCHER
SECRETARY.....TOM SINCLAIR
TREASURER.....NEIL HIGHAM

MEMBERS

ANDREW BOULDEN BRIAN BUTTIFANT
JIM ODDY HILARY THORNBURGH
ROGER THORNBURGH KEITH WARMAN

KENT GROUP PROGRAMME AUGUST 1998 TO JANUARY 1999

Sun Aug 9 High Weald Walk (Andredsweald)
25 ml. Offers of help to Ernie Bishop

Sun Aug 30 A Keeler Kanter
20 ml. Meet at Ivy House, Stelling Minnis, GR147483, for 9 a.m.
start. Pub stop. Leader; Liz Keeler

Sat/Sun Sep 5/6 Wealden Waters' Marshals' Walk
62.5 ml. (100k). For Kent Group members helping on main event.
Entry forms from Pam Prince, Entries Secretary,
Offers of help to Neal O'Rourke, Staff Officer,

Sun Sep 20 East Kent Expedition
c.20 ml. 8.30 a.m. start. Shepherdsweil Station c.p., GR257483,
Landranger 179. Pub Stop. Leader: Neal O'Rourke

Sat/Sun Oct 10/11 Wealden Waters Walk
Offers of help to Neal O'Rourke A.S.A.P.

Sun Oct 18 Les Trois Cheminees (Maurice's Masochistic March)
c.20ml. 8.30 a.m. Start from c.p. next to Hawkhurst Church,
G.R.762305. Leader: Maurice Faircloth Pub stop.

Sun Nov 15 Jim's Jolly Jaunt
c.18 ml. Contact Jim Oddy on for grid reference and
time of start, availability of food at pub (if any) etc., etc.

Sun Dec 6 Annual Lunch preceded by optional Social Walk.
Enquiries to Andrew Boulden to whom completed
application forms(enclosed) should be sent, with cheques payable
to "LDWA Kent Group", by no later than 15th November, 1998.

Fri Jan 8, 1999 Night Walk Out on the W.W. back on the N.D.W.
c. 20 ml. 9.30 p.m. at "The George", Trottiscliffe, G.R.641599.
for 10.30 p.m. Start. Leader: Ivan Waghorn

Fri/Sat/Sun Jan 15/16/17, 1999 Brecon Beacons Weekend
Leader; Andrew Boulden See his article on page
16; 'phone him to find out more about it.

GROUP GATHERINGS 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 "Rose & Crown", Wrotham,
(GR612592) in odd-numbered months and at the "Provender", Pye
Corner, Ulcombe,(GR853486) in even-numbered months from 8 p.m.

Dear Fellow Kent Group Members,

It is a truth universally acknowledged (with apologies to Shirley Hume and Jane Austen) that one of the most frequent topics of conversation amongst LDWA members is FOOD. I was therefore very interested to read about some research carried out in the early days of World War 2 by Robert McCance (an Ulsterman) and Elsie Widdowson with help from two students, Andrew Huxley and James Robinson, into the minimum diet required for survival. The object of the exercise was to draw up a scheme for weekly rationing but brown bread and vegetables, including potatoes, were unrationed.

For three months they existed largely on bread, cabbage and potatoes (incidentally the diet also of "Granny Wallon" in Laurie Lee's "Cider with Rosie") and then set out for the Lake District, McCance and Robinson cycling from Cambridge, "to verify their fitness". They hiked energetically across the fells for 10 days and on one day McCance and Huxley walked, in under 12 hours, 36 miles through Langdale, Borowdale and Eskdale, climbing about 7,000 ft. and expending an estimated 4,714 calories in the process. I am indebted to a Mr. Peter Richards, writing in Cam magazine, for the foregoing information. Just how relevant it is to the needs of LDWA members looking forward to the 21st Century - or particularly to our plans for checkpoint food on the Millennium Hundred I leave you to decide.

Talking of which plans are progressing and a meeting of the Committee is to be held on 10th September, 1998. If you have any ideas or opinions you would like to be considered please let a member of the Committee (see list in December 1997 Newsletter) have them by 31st August at the latest. In particular views would be welcomed on the designs for a logo which appear on page 15.

Talking of "hundreds" (which must come close behind food and footwear as favourite subjects of discussion) congratulations to all Kent Group Members who completed the "White Peak" event, but particularly Nick Dockree for whom it was a first and Keith Warman who completed his tenth, and commiserations to those who, for various reasons (sprained ankle, strained knees, twisted gut and incipient apoplexy due to inferior route description) did not finish this time. Thanks to all those who helped on the checkpoint; the cheerful service seemed to be greatly appreciated by all the walkers - and the runners.

Before the "hundred" we had two social walks led by Shirley Higgins (about which you will find an article by Zoe Thornburgh on a later page) and by Ernie Bishop about which no report has yet (22/6/98) reached me. Keith's report on the 20 mile AGM walk reached me too late for the last newsletter and you will find it on a later page. My thanks to all contributors whether asked or not. Application form for Annual Dinner enclosed; please return to Andrew Boulden by 15th November. Contributions for December Newsletter should reach me by first Monday in November.

Tom Sinclair, [REDACTED]

THE THIRTY NINE WELSH WINKS

(Number 7 in an occasional series of off-beat excursions)

Saturday 15th March 1998 saw Shirlie and me mingle outside the Abernant Lake Hotel in Llanwrtyd Wells, Mid-Wales for the 20-miles social walk which was part of the LDWA AGM weekend.

Reputedly the smallest town in Britain, with a population of 650, Llanwrtyd Wells is a Victorian spa resort set amidst forests, rivers, reservoirs and huge expanses of rolling desolate moorland. Sheep outnumber humans by several times to one and the red kite continues its remarkable success story from near-extinction to approximately 200 breeding pairs today. This area was the last refuge for these graceful birds, which have recently been re-introduced into the Chilterns and Scotland.

Gordon Green, our leader, rounded up the 41 other brave souls (number of breeding pairs unknown) explaining that we would be heading northwards into the remote land where water would never be far away. Planned refreshment stops were to be at 6 and 16 miles, with an al-fresco lunch "somewhere in the hills". (We didn't need al-fresco's lunch - we all had our own).

With appointed (or annointed?) back-markers in Keith Chesterton and Paul Hatcher, we left the town behind in no time, passing the Cambrian Woollen Mills run by the Royal British Legion. A lovely ascending track was followed into and through the Irfon Forest onto an open, windswept plateau with no sight or sound of human habitation. The promised rain hadn't yet arrived, but evidence of recent flooding was apparent as we squelched and slithered our way steeply down a slanting bridleway to the secluded hamlet of Abergwesyn further up the Irfon valley. Soon we were strolling up the lane leaving deposits of best welsh bog on the tarmac to arrive at the cosy village hall. Here, the ladies of the local WI were kindly dispensing teas, coffees and biscuits to much appreciation.

Suitably refreshed, we set off again into the hills, soon with the gurgling Afon Gwesyn river for company. A few isolated farms dotted the scene and even the sun began to shine in this sylvan setting. Cries of disbelief up ahead indicated that our bridleway crossed the river at a ford. The cold, rushing water was about 6 inches deep with no obvious detour available. One by one our party waded across, like zebras swimming through some raging African torrent to reach succulent pastures beyond. Shirlie and I couldn't help feeling just a tad pious as we calmly strolled through in our newly acquired waterproof Bogtrotters.

The group then became rather strung out as the steady climb continued with valley walls closing in on both sides. At the head of the valley, an impressive - both visually and harmoniously - cataract was reached and, amongst rocky outcrops in the lee of the upland breeze, we settled for our picnic. Further down the valley a pair of red kites was circling in overcast skies.

From here onwards, the path disappeared on the ground and, as the climbing eased, we found ourselves at the edge of a high moorland plateau, with nothing but tussock grass ahead and the land rising slowly to the prominent beehive cairn on Drygarn Fawr (just over 2000 feet) on the far horizon. Our pace slackened alarmingly as we struggled through peaty bogs and ankle-wrenching clumps of tussock grass sprouting waist-high tufts. Small streams needed hurdling and

the group soon became very disjointed in attempting to find the easiest route. With a mile to go to reach the beehive, we turned westwards and still upwards across the lonely morass to meet the bridleway from Drygarn Fawr to the Irfon valley. Here, in the afternoon sunshine, we also encountered the 25-miles group, having completed their extra loop which included a swarming visit to the beehive cairn. It surely must have been a long, arduous climb across the strength-sapping wilderness.

Now, altogether as one group and about 60 strong, a southerley tack was followed through a delightfully airy forest to emerge high above the upper Irfon valley at a panoramic viewpoint. We had permission to walk along the ridge top (a non right of way) for three wonderful miles, with rolling hills on every horizon and in the company of darting pipits, before descending once again to Abergwesyn. Gordon the leader had to account for our actions to a farmer who questioned our "trespass". It then transpired that we had come down through a neighbouring farmer's fields but an apologetic explanation seemed to suffice.

On the edge of the sleepy hamlet we turned to reach a sturdy stone mansion set idyllically in mature trees. A former baronial hall, so we reliably had been informed, had served recently as a hotel, but was now in the private hands of our hosts, John and Alex, who very kindly threw open their doors to our sweaty ensemble for an afternoon tea stop. We marched straight through the front door, passing a huge lounge and a swirling staircase, to arrive in a stone-flagged rear room with a roaring log fire blazing in a massive stone fireplace. Cauldrons of tea and coffee were being dispensed by John and Alex in a surreal situation.

Weary legs were rested awhile. Most unusually for me, I wanted a quick snooze but only had time for 39 winks. Time enough though, for in a dream-like trance, I spied Brigadier Sinclair in the corner completely at ease with his surroundings. Dressed in his Norfolk jacket, moleskin plus-fours and brown brogues polished with military precision, he was at his carved oak desk editing his local walking Group's latest Newsletter. His trusty quill, fully-charged with black Indian ink was feverishly scratching its way across a quarter ream of Bockingford 140lb watercolour paper. A huge draught of foaming porter, bubbling away in the ancestral pewter quart pot, teetered precariously on the desk edge. A slightly battered silver goblet of usequebaugh was conveniently to hand. His two faithful Great Danes, Bellum and Kitchener, slumbered loyally at his feet.

Moments later I awoke from my reverie. We eventually dragged ourselves away from the crackling fire, bade our fond farewells to our hosts and continued our sojourn down the Irfon valley. The stream seemed full (of water) as it tumbled and chuckled over and around rocks beneath trees displaying the fresh growths of the new year. An undulating stretch through a parallel woodland brought us onto a track above the river, which gave lovely views down towards Llanwrtyd Wells. Just before the town we passed the spa wells in a somewhat sad state of repair. All too soon we were safely back at our base - happy to have experienced a memorable day's walking in such a beautiful, unspoilt area.

Keith Warman

HELP needed on the DURHAM DALES HUNDRED. A very few have offered to man a checkpoint and we shall need many more particularly if we end up having to do the one at 96 miles which, with scant regard for the practicalities, Northumbria Group have presently allocated to us. We are working on the possibility of a swap with another group and there may be better news before publication.

CAPTION COMPETITION

Many thanks to all those who sent me the products of their fertile imaginations. Here are the aforesaid products:-

Front Cover: "Headless runner chasing giant drawing pin"

Back Cover: "Giant drawing pin commiserating with exhausted headless runner" - both from Laurie Lowe who seems to me a bit unkind towards the artistic flair of Chris Barnett's computer.

Photo of Tom, Paul and Neil:-

"This is the best home movie since we saw Peter Barnett in 'The Lost Footpath'. Brian Haigh, Surrey Group Secretary.

"We could collect more money for group funds if we had proper begging bowls" (in speech bubble above Neil) Laurie Lowe.

1. "Contributions for the Kent Committee Annual Dinner gratefully accepted".
2. "Roll up ! Roll up! Throw the ping-pong ball into the beaker and win the Chairman's special prize".
3. "But surely Neil, Group funds must be sufficient to get this damn' roof fixed once and for all?" (speech bubble over Tom).
4. "Look at these 3 mugs!" all from Keith Warman.

The next batch is from Shirlie Gill (not wishing to be outdone)

I. "If the Left Hand is on the Right and the Right Hand is on the Left, who is Left Right in the Middle with his Left below his Right?"

II. "Now for Kent Group Rule No. 37: -

(i) Arrive at Checkpoint (ii) Locate mug (iii) Offer it thus".

III. "We bet there is no other LDWA Group that can knock the spots off us".

IV. "OK, own up then. What joker removed the handles from our mugs?"

V. "So, we are agreed then. On the Kent 100 - all finishers must guess how many spots there are on the Kent mugs. The winner will receive a spotless mug."

No prize for the best caption . Turn to the back cover for another photo on which to let your imaginations run free.TS.

THE "CAYTHORPE CANTER", Saturday 18th April, by Brian Russell.

Always on the look out for a new or different challenge I decided to enter the "Caythorpe Canter" in Lincolnshire - in reality a route description event aimed more at runners than walkers. Because of the depressive weather I had been in some doubt about travelling 100 miles to do a 26 mile walk in the pouring rain but on the Friday evening a window of dry and bright weather was forecast and when I arose early on Saturday morning it was actually dry. Unfortunately you **cannot** rely on weather forecasters as on arrival it started to pour and this was to be the day's pattern; a mixture of early, frequent showers rounded off by steady, continuous rain.

With Caythorpe nestling on the edge of the limestone ridge escarpment we immediately dropped down into the Trent Valley, with the usual mixture of long drawn out Lincolnshire tracks in tandem with copious amounts of water around. These, mixed together with a lot of road walking made for a rather tedious, although flat, first half of the route. Going in an anti-clockwise direction we passed through some pretty villages; Stubton which was checkpoint 1, Hougham, Marston and Barkston, the halfway checkpoint. These helped to break up the rather monotonous trudge and with the terrain being so flat there was very little to see other than the occasional church spire sticking up on the surrounding horizon. During the first half we used a section of the Viking Way, accompanied by field upon field of yellow rape seed - so much so that I imagined yellow all the way from Oakham, in the happily reinstated county of Rutland, to the Humber Bridge where the Way ends. I did not feel in the least inspired to do this Long Distance Path one day.

Passing Barkston Post Office two ladies broke off their conversation to ask us what we were doing and, on being told, one said, "Watch out for the hill", her face breaking into a grin. Hill?! In Lincolnshire, that land of flat and prairie landscape? But, alas, she was right. Around the corner we met a long sharp hill whose only blessing was that it passed through a stretch of woodland - the first of the day. However, once at the top, the trees soon disappeared and the wide open spaces beckoned again along with the now continuous rain. This later section with a few more inclines and some very muddy tracks was difficult for steady progress and there was more mud after the final checkpoint at Ancaster, which sits astride the grand old Roman road of Ermine Street, before the finish at the Clubhouse.

Although an event it felt more like a social walk with checkpoints (excellent facilities and food at all four and the finish) thrown in all for an entry fee of £5. Steve Lord and his band of very willing helpers proved what can be done to attract and service walkers and I found my own time of just under 7 hours more than acceptable in the circumstances. I was soon on my way home via my favourite Fish and Chip Shop in Stamford. The organisation was excellent and given better weather conditions it could be an enjoyable day's walking. BRIAN.
(That sentence could be called "praising with faint damn". Ed.)

A GROUP LIBRARY

The Committee recently decided that it would be a good idea to have available for use by group members a small stock of guides to LDP's and for the Librarian to maintain also a list of such guides, maps etc. owned by members which they were willing to lend out. Trevor Blake has kindly agreed to be the Librarian and by the time you read this he should have the following:-

Guides published by the Kent County Council on:-

Darent Valley Walk	Elham Valley Walk
Greensand Way in Kent	High Weald Walk
Medway Valley Walk	North Downs Way
Stour Valley Walk	

The Cotswold Way by Kev Reynolds, Cicerone Press, 1994 edition
West Highland Way by Robert Aitken. Official Guide 2nd Ed. 1984.
West Highland Way Accomodation Guide
West Highland Way Official Route Map
West Highland Way Strip Map published by Footprint.

The last five were donated by Laurie Lowe who has also given, for sale at 'a pound or two for group funds' these two books:-

A Coast to Coast Walk by A. Wainwright, published 1973. ("good eyesight is needed to use this as a route guide!"
Wildest Britain by Roland Smith, Blandford Press, 1984, - a visitor's guide to the National Parks. "For coffee table rather than rucksack", is Laurie's comment on this one.
Contact Tom on [REDACTED] to make him an offer for either.

Contact Trevor on [REDACTED] to borrow any of the guides listed or to add to the list either by way of a gift or just names of books or maps which you are willing to lend but which will remain your property. Trevor will keep a record of when items are lent and to whom so that he can ensure that they are returned to the right place in good time.

WELCOME

Since the last meeting the following people have joined the LDWA and the Kent Group (one must do the first before the second):- Robert Hamilton, Mark Robson, Helen Scott, Kirsty Speake, Avril Stapleton, Geoff Thorpe and Ron Workman. I look forward to meeting those I do not already know and to seeing again Janet Nicholson who has rejoined the Group after a lapse.

SOUTHERN TRIPLE CHALLENGE

Those of you who read "Strider" from cover to cover may have spotted in the April issue that Essex & Herts Group was planning to hold the Marshals' Walk for the "Three Forests Way" on the weekend of 10/11 October. I am pleased to be able to report that the date has now been changed to 26/27 September thus avoiding a clash with our Wealden Waters. Both events, along with the "Surrey Summits" form the Southern Triple Challenge! T.

VANGUARD VENTURES

At the beginning of the wettest April for many a year, Shirlie and I decided on a leisurely 4-day stroll down the Vanguard Way (from East Croydon to the English Channel at Seaford) for our Easter walking tour. This brought back pleasant memories for me of walking the same route in September 1989 on one of the Group's infamous long Social Walks, then most ably led by one Peter Barnett with excellent support - throughout the whole distance - from Pauline Barnett, Ernie and Celia Bishop, and Susan and Ivan Verrell.

A "leisurely" stroll we thought, averaging about 17 miles per day, but the heavy going along much of the route meant a rapid re-assessment of our perceptions.

With safe deliverance by Connex South Central to East Croydon, we were both surprised and delighted at how quickly our route took us away from the hustle of South London and soon led us to the sanctuary of Coombe Gardens and the Borough of Croydon's garden nursery. Wet woodland byways between newish housing developments took us through Selsdon Nature Reserve to the peaceful hamlet of Farleigh.

Descending the scarp of the North Downs towards Titsey, the afternoon's filthy downpour caught us unawares on an exposed section. Having safely crossed the M25 (via the "Invicta 100" footbridge), we rested in the sunshine at Limpsfield Chart prior to making a 2-miles off route detour to our first night's B & B at Oxted.

The second day saw us crossing the Greensand ridge in idyllic spring conditions, along field-paths familiar to stalwarts of the Gatliff Marathon, to reach Haxted Mill near Edenbridge. On the bridge over the River Eden we tucked into our lunch, with threatening clouds overhead and rumbling thunder in the near distance. Whilst trying to avoid two rather frisky cows, we slurped and splashed across sodden fields to Cernes Farm. Soon we were in the land of the Wealden Waters, ascending Dry Hill (what a name!), on the top of which we ducked and shuddered with fright at the most amazing lightning storm which lasted just 10 minutes. Needless to say, the next 3 miles down to Forest Row were somewhat precipitous, both underfoot and overhead, and our arrival in the local convenience store was anything but convenient for the staff as they stood aghast at the dripping twosome shuffling along the aisles. Early evening sunshine made a real contrast as we squelched across the golf course at the top of Ashdown Forest to a wonderful B & B at Coleman's Hatch - just down the lane from the bowls club checkpoint used on the Wealden Waters.

The transformation in the weather on day three was remarkable and, following my wade through the watersplash at Newbridge and then the climb up to Gill's Lap (I'm not famous enough to get landmarks named after me), we enjoyed a beautiful traverse of Ashdown Forest to the now closed Crow and Gate pub on the A26 near Crowborough. Then an officially diverted path around Stroods was not that easy to follow on the ground and, whilst studying the map, we were accosted by the local handyman, who proceeded to regale us with tales of this and that. Neither of us could decide which gender said handyman, or rather handyperson, belonged to, which continues to intrigue us to this day.

More meandering through fields, woods and along quiet lanes eventually led us to meet briefly the Wealdway before Blackboys, where we took advantage of the rare sunshine and rested in the allotments. A path in Woodland Trust plantings, followed by more lanes and tracks, took us to Chiddingfold with its dominant stone-built church spire, a landmark for miles around. The late afternoon had turned very cold, and it was with some relief that we reached our next B & B at Holmes Hill following a surreal encounter with a flooded stream amidst newly-planted saplings.

We awoke on day four to pouring rain and our landlady's promise of a lot more to come during the day. We spurned her kind suggestion of "why don't you get a taxi to Seaford?" and politely reminded her that we were British and, more importantly, Kentish Tygers who do not give up. In torrential rain we bade farewell to our bemused landlady and set off on our 16-miles traverse of the lower Weald and were amazed to discover that the rain abated after 10 minutes to reveal a lovely sunny day! Underfoot was another story however, and many of the fields we crossed were completely sodden which made for difficult going. At Brickfields Farm we tarried awhile to inspect the Angora sheep, whilst tiny pink piglets grunted their way around our feet - a most peaceful setting.

Not quite believing our weatherly luck, we made our way to Mount Pleasant Farm where a chance encounter with a postman (whose name was not Twyman) gave us an advanced warning of "a very vicious dog, a bull terrier, who once slashed the tyres of my postvan" at a house just ahead. With dry throats and adrenalin racing, we progressed sheepishly, only to meet the postman again who told us that the dog was now "in the kitchen". Silently we tiptoed (not easy in studded Bogtrotters) past the house with stout sticks at the ready. Just as we started to breathe more freely, we had to wallow and slide along a horrendously muddy byway - easily the most difficult part of the whole route. We were both secretly praying that said bull terrier would not be let loose as we felt like sitting ducks in the mud and mire.

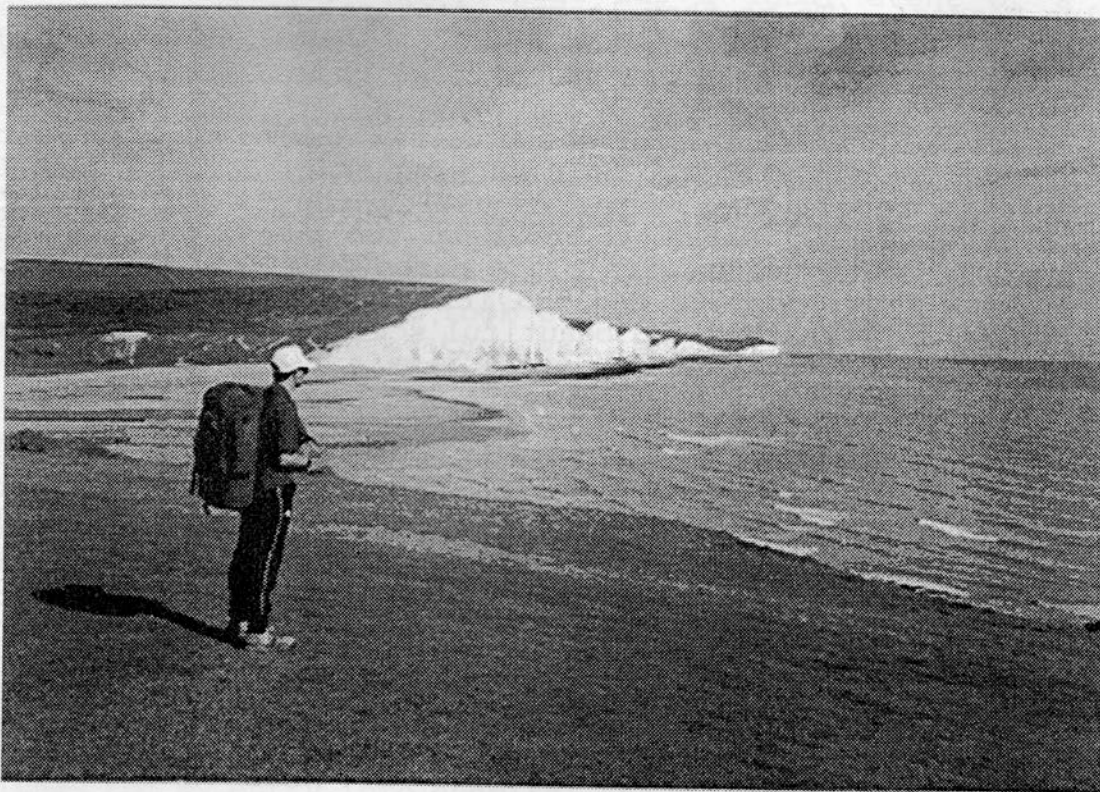
At Berwick, we unclenched our jaws and ate our three-day old sandwiches in the delightful churchyard. Alfriston was our next target - busy, bustling, traffic-snarled Alfriston - now seen in a different light to that when passed through at 2 am during the Downsman Hundred. At East Dean, we ascended the 227 steps and rested overlooking the meandering River Cuckmere, all raised levees and ox-bow lakes. Our first view of both the sea and the Seven Sisters was dramatic in the afternoon sun and the cropped grass traverse of Seaford Head was nothing short of sheer delight.

In no time at all, we found ourselves dropping down to the promenade at Seaford, from where Shirlye swiftly sniffed out the nearby Safeway store. Successfully raided, our afternoon picnic on the prom actually saw us sunburnt - despite being caked in dried mud from the waist down. The 6 pm train was easily made and we arrived back in Maidstone at 9 pm to reflect on our not quite so "leisurely" but, nonetheless, very enjoyable journey of about 68 miles.

Keith Warman



"I sink in deep mire where there is no standing....."
Psalm 69, Verse 2.



"I am come into deep waters....."
Psalm 69, Verse 2.

"SNEAKING INTO SUSSEX", 26th April 1998, by Zoe Thornburgh.

For those who lacked the energy to run the London Marathon on Sunday 26th April, Shirley Higgins provided us with a leisurely option; 'Sneaking into Sussex', a mere 22 miles, was a most enjoyable alternative. We did think of Kevin Puttock at 9.30 a.m. when, just about to start the marathon, he was unlikely to be thinking of us but, by then we were well under way after a prompt start at 8.15 p.m. - Liz Keeler just made it!

During the morning we walked through woods and farmland, the bluebells at several points were spectacular and exposed stone outcrops in a short gorgelike climb added extra interest. Apart from a brief coffee stop at Peasmarsh Church we kept up a brisk pace in order to reach Udimore (13 miles) in time for a welcome lunch stop at the 'King's Head'. Those with sandwiches were dropped off at the church but a cold wind soon encouraged them to join the others. Our boot protectors* certainly gave the locals something to talk about. Tom Sinclair joined us here together with 3 others who, too late for the start, had made their own way to the pub.

Replete the walking in the afternoon was somewhat slower, not helped by the numerous stiles we encountered, but the anticipated rain held off and the sun continued to shine. Paul impressed us greatly with his knowledge of sheep when, at the afternoon tea stop he identified some unusual nearby specimens as 'Clun Headed'. (To me they looked identical to the thousands of others we had seen during the day.) However, no-one could mistake the inquisitive* Highland cattle we passed soon after.

I think the vast number of sheep we saw during the day must have infected me somewhat as, on returning home, I found that I was unable to recall the route. Adjusting the 'when in Rome' maxim to cover Romney Marsh, I had been too busy bleating and following the leader to observe place names or river positions. But I do know that, despite the mud it was an excellent walk - good company, fine weather and beautiful scenery. Shirley, thank you very much. (But the question still remains: "How do you know when you have passed from middle age?"). ZOE.

* It occurred to me while typing this that the Tesco plastic bags or whatever you use might more appropriately be called 'carpet protectors' but you might then call me an old pedant. As I recall it was Zoe who was inquisitive and her wish to become more closely acquainted with the aforesaid Highland cattle prompted them to chase the former and current Editors into the next field. I don't pretend to know the answer to Zoe's (or Shirley's?) question but I am reminded of Richard Armour's lines:-

"Of late I appear to have reached that stage

"When people look old who are only my age".

Apart from an evening social walk followed by the monthly gathering in the new venue of the 'Rose & Crown', Wrotham, (both seemed to be appreciated by those who were there) the next event was, of course, the annual "Hundred" so.....

WHITE PEAK 100, 1998 - CHECKPOINT FIVE

by Bryan Clarke.

Just briefly, the Kent Group checkpoint at Bonsall seemed to go very well with lots of thanks from the entrants who passed through. The hall had recently been re-decorated (the curtain rails were being put up when Les Maple and I arrived, Tom) and was pleasant to work in. It was a bit small on occasions and became very hot with all the "bodies" in it. We had about five retirements with various ailments. I think it totalled seventeen, including those who had retired at earlier checkpoints, out of the 497 who had started. (I have a note which says: "480 arrived, 472 continued", Tom).

Later, apparently, the retirements increased dramatically which was surprising to us considering the good weather (not so good on Sunday morning, T). I had heard, even before the event that the route description could have been better and perhaps this had something to do with the retirements. BRYAN.

Thank you, Bryan for that report and for all the hard work put in by Ann, Brian, Bryan, Celia, Christine, Dave, Ernie, Hilary, Jackie, Kathy, Les, Mary, Pauline, Peter, Phil, Ron, Shirley and Trevor. If anyone can remember what happened to the golf umbrella which was unclaimed when we were locking up, please let me know as I have recently learned that it probably belonged to David and Christine Wood. T.

Not long after the '100' there was a local event of a very different nature about which one of my regular reporters has sent me the following paragraph:-

ST. MARY'S NORTH DOWNS CHALLENGE 30th May, 1998, Bryan Clarke.

Ex Kent Group member Mike Cursons' walks in aid of St. Mary's Church, Kemsing, on Saturday 30th May, went very well. He used his experience to put on an LDWA style set of four distances (20, 14.5, 10 and 5 miles) with good checkpoint support. The route was very good and took place in the valleys and hills of the North Downs. The weather was very hot and dry and the hill climbs quite strenuous. There were over 120 entries and the event raised a good sum for the church. It was great to see Kent group members there - it was like a reunion meeting. BRYAN.

Thank you Bryan. Amongst those present I spotted Martyn Berry, Brian Buttifant, Dave Cowley and Moira Rickards (all marshals), Dave Sheldrake, Ivan Waghorn, Merv Nutburn and Fiona King (20 miles), Bryan and Trevor Blake (14.5), Jenny (10). T.

A few days later Trevor had entered hospital for a long-awaited operation and beforehand he took the trouble to send me the following sentences for publication:-

"Thanks to all the members of the Kent LDWA for their good wishes for my entry into hospital and my quick recovery after the Operation. I appreciate their concern and Marainna will let Bryan and your good self know the results". TREVOR.

I am pleased to be able to report that Trevor is recovering well although it will be a long time before he is "walking-fit".

About the same time another letter to the Editor arrived from Alan Ball who sent best wishes to all his friends along with a sufficient donation to group funds to ensure that he will receive this Newsletter until December 2000.

OUSE VALLEY AMBLE

A letter from Gill Bunker tells me that this event, contrary to the April "Strider", is to be held on Sunday 6th September. If anyone feels like dashing off to Milton Keynes for an 8.30/9 a.m. start on a 30-miler after doing a very fast time on the Wealden Waters Marshals' Walk they may obtain an entry from Gill Bunker, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. This is, however, NOT recommended even if, like me, you are only planning to support on the W.W.M.W.
N.B. OFFERS OF HELP TO NEAL O'ROURKE ON [REDACTED] A.S.A.P.

CROYDON FESTIVAL OF WALKING

A different sort of letter reached me from one Colin Saunders who is director of the "Croydon International 2-day Festival of Walking" to be held on Saturday and Sunday 12th and 13th September. That is the same weekend as the "Wellington Boot" but, for those not inclined to travel to Somerset and walk 100 kilometres, distances of 40, 25 and 15 kilometres, the last including an optional quiz, are available. Entry forms can be obtained from:- "WALKWISE", [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and I am hoping some will be available for the gathering at the "Provender" on 3rd August.

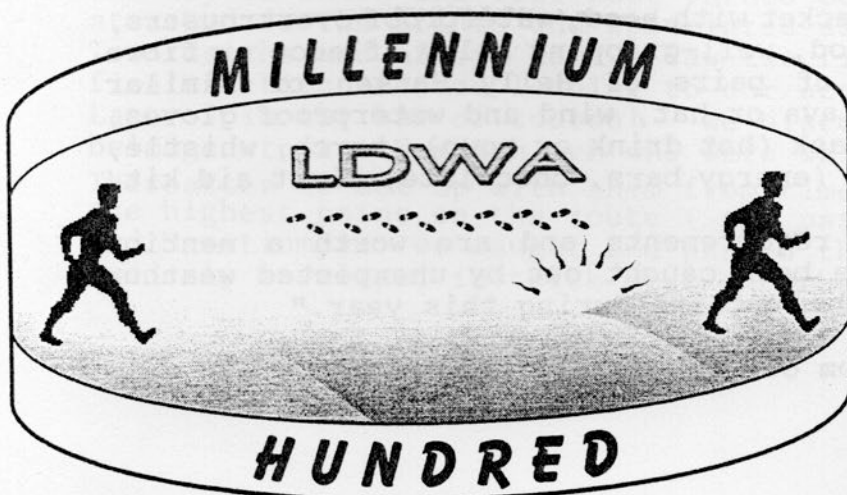
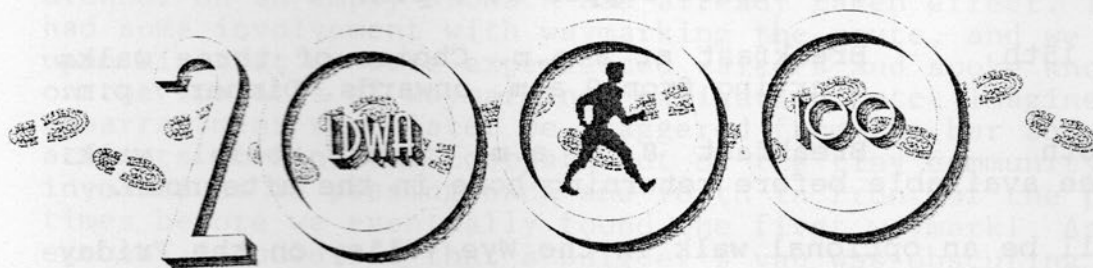
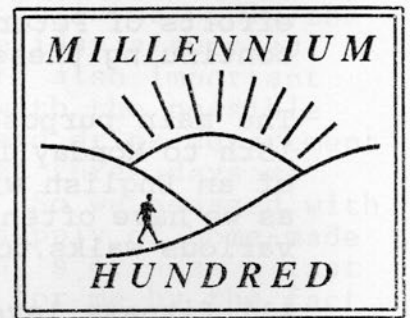
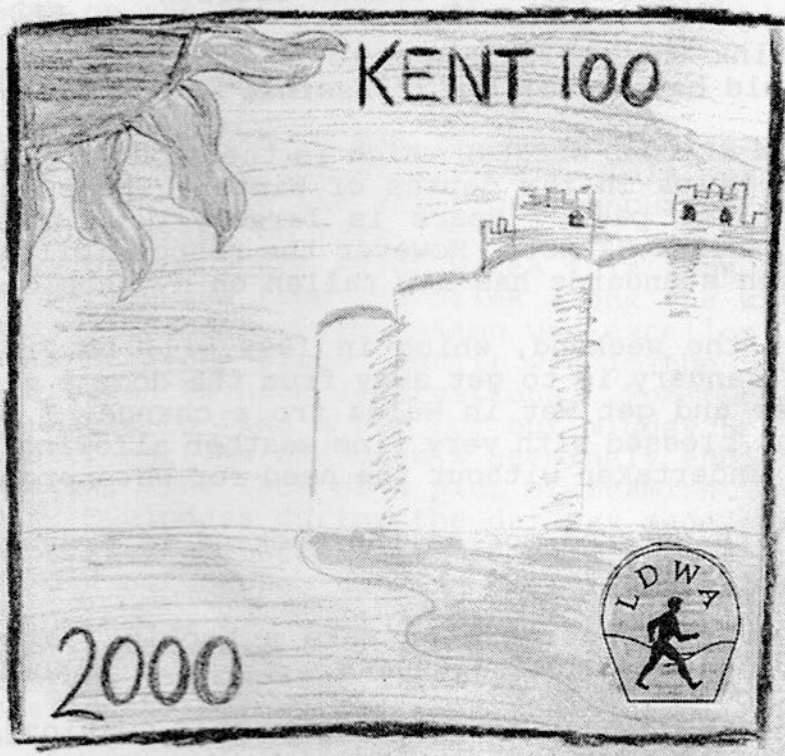
ANNUAL XMAS LUNCHEON

Time is fast approaching for you to think about adding a few inches around the waistline to prepare for winter.

What better way to start this bout of gluttony than the annual xmas luncheon at the Weald of Kent on Sunday 6th December. This venue, which has been used for the past 4 years, has proved to be very popular and it would be nice to see some new faces this year as well as the hearty regulars.

The pre-luncheon walk of approx. 6 miles gets the day off to a splendid start with home made mince pies and sausage rolls being served at about half way to whet the appetite. Showers are available back at the golf club before moving into our exclusive function room which incorporates a bar. A three course feast then follows before moving on to the raffle. At some time the Chairman normally staggers to his feet to share a few words of wisdom with the assembled crowd.

If you are interested then please complete the enclosed form and return it to me. Please also 'phone me on [REDACTED] if you would like more information.
ANDREW.



2000  100

Millennium Hundred
Kent LDWA

A TOUGH ACT TO FOLLOW. By Andrew Boulden

At first you may think that this refers to me storming uphill. No: the headline would have read: 'An impossible act to follow'.

I refer to the BRECON BEACONS WEEKEND which is the group's annual pilgrimage to South Wales in the depths of Winter. The success of the weekend over the past 7 years is largely down to the efforts of Peter & Pauline Barnett. However the responsibility of continuing these high standards has now fallen on my shoulders.

The main purpose of the weekend, which in 1999 will be Friday 15th to Monday 18th January is to get away from the doom & gloom of an English winter and get wet in Wales for a change. I jest as we have often been blessed with very fine weather allowing the various walks to be undertaken without the need for waterproofs.

All fitness levels are catered for as the weekend is organised for the enjoyment of everyone.

If you would like to find out more or make a booking to come along then please phone me on [REDACTED] ANDREW.

Based at Danywenallt Centre, Talybont-on-Usk, GR107205. Recommended maps: Landranger 160 and 161 and Outdoor Leisure.

Programme

Friday 15th

Assemble at Danywenallt from 6 p.m. onwards for Buffet Supper at 8 p.m.

Saturday 15th

Breakfast at 8 a.m. Choice of three walks starting from 9 a.m. onwards. Dinner 7 p.m.

Sunday 16th

Breakfast 8.30 a.m. Short social walk. Tea/coffee available before returning home in the afternoon.

There will be an optional walk in the Wye Valley on the Friday and one can stay on the Sunday night for a small extra charge. Here is what Pete Barnett wrote in the December 1995 Newsletter:-

"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 pairs 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."

The next 5 pages are from our foreign correspondents.....

IRELAND - 1998

Laurie Lowe

In the July '97 issue of the newsletter, I reported on a walking holiday on the Kerry Way. Now - in what could be called "part 2 of Irish Walks for Wrinklies" - I would like to recount some of the highlights of another Irish trip.

We spent two weeks in May in the West of Ireland. Eight days were taken to complete The Dingle Way. This was a very varied and scenic route, with the additional bonus of several long stretches of beach walking on firm, smooth sand. However, it is not only the quality of the route which makes this type of holiday a success. Accommodation and food and drink along the way are also important factors. The B&B accommodation was excellent - with the possible exception of one case. But it was in the food and drink department that I began to have reservations. For the first three days we were unable to find a bar for our midday break. So we managed with our water bottles and Jean's seemingly endless supply of home-made flapjacks. The lack of a pint of Beamish, Murphy's or - as a last resort - Guinness during the day was made worse for me by the fact that Shirley and Jean insisted that we eat in posh restaurants which did not happen to have beer licences!

On the fourth day, at about 3 pm, we arrived at the delightfully decorated "T.P.'s Bar" overlooking the small harbour at Ballydavid. I ordered the drinks and sank the pint of Beamish with great pleasure. I had just started on the second pint when it was suggested that perhaps a packet of crisps would be in order, or even a round of sandwiches if the kitty would run to it! In my haste to get outside some of the 'black nectar' I had forgotten the need for food. The sandwiches were duly ordered and consumed but the effect of the alcohol on an empty stomach had already taken effect. The barman had some involvement with waymarking the route, and we impressed upon him that we were experienced walkers and spoke knowledgeably on the subjects of waymarking, navigation, etc. Imagine then our embarrassment when later we staggered from the bar and had several attempts to find the footpath out of the tiny community. This involved us in passing back and forth in front of the pub three times before we eventually found the first waymark! As a feeble excuse, I could add that a builder's van was obscuring the otherwise very obvious path.

We met only two other walkers during the eight days on The Dingle Way. Each time we walked on one of the long beach sections, we were aware that we were following two sets of footprints in the sand. One pair was larger than the other and was characterised by the way in which the left foot turned outwards. We became quite attached to the prints and speculated as to whom they belonged. Towards the end of one day we saw two figures ahead of us on the final section of road leading to our accommodation for the night. Later - in the bar of course! - we discovered that the footprints belonged to two Swedish men who were walking in Wellington boots. Thereafter we met up with them from time to time. On the climb to the highest point on the route (the pass between Brandon Mountain and Masatiompan) we caught and passed them. At the summit we were suddenly enveloped in thick mist and the steep descent needed great

care over rock and slippery grass. We met them again later and they commented that it was the sound of our voices ahead of them that had guided them down through the mist. That the two ladies had made a great impression on the two Swedes became apparent two days later when we were in a bar (again!) at Camp. They had passed through earlier (having taken a short cut) and had regaled the landlord with tales of the two hardy English women whom they had met.

This same landlord was famous for his repertoire of Irish jokes, or more accurately, his Kerryman jokes. Example: "How do you confuse a Kerryman?" "You put three shovels against the wall and ask him to take his pick." There was also a joke about a duck's bill but I did not understand it. Ask Jean or Shirley to explain it to you sometime. He (the landlord, not the duck) had spent time fruit-picking in the Maidstone area in the early 1950's

On completion of The Dingle Way we drove north to County Clare and spent two days walking across The Burren. This is an area of limestone and is noted for the great variety of wild flowers to be seen in May and June. The first day was a superb route following boreens over the limestone plateau. On the second day there were a number of places where the route on the map was not apparent on the ground. This did not cause us any real problems but it did entail some extra road walking.

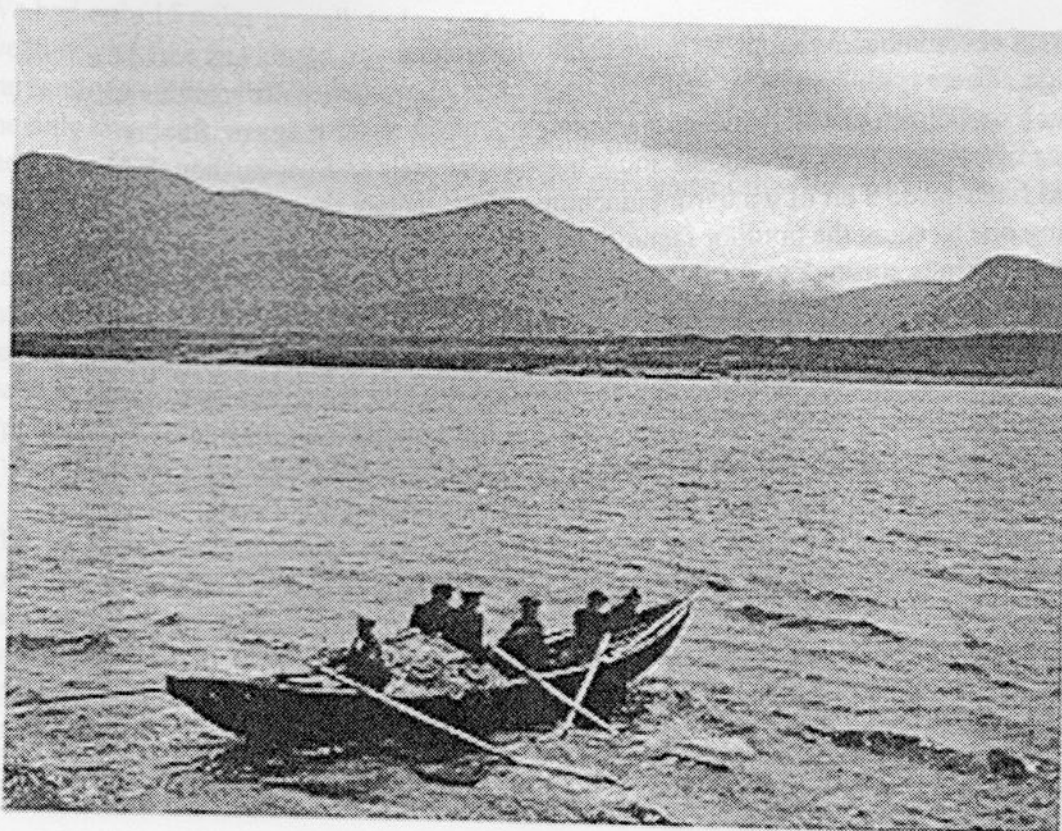
The most bizarre incident took place when we were following the coast path above the famous Cliffs of Moher. We had stopped at the crowded Visitors' Centre for a late morning tea break and were keen to get away from the hordes of tourists who were arriving by the coachload. We were soon on a path which ran along the edge of the very high cliffs. It was quite exposed in places and apparently it produced a high 'tingle' factor for one of our group. At a point about halfway between the Visitors' Centre and Hag's Head, we encountered an elderly gentleman wearing a dark suit, polished shoes, a tie which sported a picture of Sidney Harbour bridge and several days' growth of whiskers. He pointed to a shabby notice which declared "Private Properti" and demanded £1 to let us pass on to what he claimed was his land. He professed no knowledge of The Burren Way, chose to ignore the evidence of my map and claimed that the money was to pay for the loss of his cows who had a habit of getting through damaged fences and hurling themselves off the cliffs! It was almost certainly a con but worth a pound for the entertainment value. I await a reply from the Shannon Tourist Office about this incident.

A very different character was Ted the taxi driver. When we finished the linear Burren Way at Liscannor, we needed to get back to the car which had been left at Ballyvaughan. It was arranged that Ted would pick us up at The Anchor Bar in Liscannor. He turned out to be quite a character. He had only one leg and drove his large, comfortable people carrier with manual controls. On the 30 mile journey back to Ballyvaughan, he gave us an informative lecture on the history, geology and wildlife of the area. This was accompanied

by much hand-waving as he pointed out features of interest on both sides of the road. Jean admitted to shutting her eyes when he drove down the steep and aptly named Corkscrew Hill, still gesticulating with great enthusiasm but little concern for road safety. His talents also extended to playing music in the pubs of Doolin most evenings.

In 1997, while in Kerry, we had hoped to be able to climb the high point in The Reeks called Carrauntoohil. At 3,400 feet this is the highest mountain in Ireland. The sight of snow on the tops had been enough to deter us. This year the weather was favourable so we used our spare day for this venture. What little information we had gleaned from a guide book in the Killarney Tourist Office suggested that some scrambling would be involved. We decided to have a go on the understanding that if anyone felt uneasy about proceeding further, then we would turn back. The weather was set fine and it was a gentle walk-in to the base of the mountain proper. For the first time we ^{had} other walkers around. We scrambled slowly and carefully up a steep, boulder and scree-filled gully known as The Devil's Ladder, pausing from time to time to convince ourselves that we could cope with a descent over the same route. After a brief stop at a grassy saddle we tackled the final steep but easier ascent to the huge steel cross which marked the summit. In the absence of definite information on alternative routes down, we opted to return via The Devil's Ladder. We negotiated this with a lot of care and - I suspect - not much style! But we did admit to a feeling of satisfaction as we passed between the twin lakes at the foot of the Ladder and took an easy stroll along the track back to the car at the road end. We had seen perhaps 15 people all day. Compare this to the numbers one would meet on a fine May day on Snowdon or Ben Nevis! And we were certain that we were the most senior in age of the people on the mountain that day!

It was a suitable finale to a good holiday.



5 A curragh in Brandon Bay, Co. Kerry

ROAD TO CHARTRES

At 4.20 a.m. on Saturday, 30th May, all the telephones rang in all of the bedrooms of the Hotel du Danemark near the Gare de l'Est. This was the start in earnest of the 1998 Chartres Pilgrimage for more than 70 British and 40 Irish who had arrived in Paris on the previous day. By 6.30 we had had breakfast, handed over our heavy luggage and were inside the great cathedral of Notre Dame along with about 15,000 others. After hymns, messages and speeches the head of the column set off at 7.35. As our contingent was near the tail it was almost an hour later when we finally got going on the march of some 62 miles to Chartres. With that number of people it is not easy to get an even flow and there was much stopping and starting so that it took a long time to get out of Paris.

The weather was fine and warm but we were already behind programme. After one stop for drinks we arrived in the woods of Verrieres le Buisson where Mass was underway, which was just as well as all the services take the best part of two hours. After that we squatted where we were and had lunch. Bread rolls, bottles of water and barrels of red wine are provided but pilgrims must supply anything else they require.

Being at the tail, it was after 3 o'clock before we were off again. The sky was now beginning to cloud over and we had only completed 9 of the 24 miles we had to do that day. There followed many hours of solid walking with occasional stops for refreshment - water only. One pilgrim related to me how on telling an aunt of her plans had received just the comment, "It's no picnic, you know". We began to find that out. It had long been obvious that we would be late in arriving that night and at 8.30 in the evening the rain started, gently at first but getting heavier. The last hour was spent in solid rain in the knowledge that our luggage would be laid out in a field awaiting collection. We arrived wet and tired at 9.45, collected our soggy bags and made our way to the allotted tents.

Each tent accommodates about 50 bodies almost touching and hardly any room for baggage. There is no light other than that from one's own torches. It is at this stage that each participant privately makes a solemn vow never to do it again. Supper consists of a mug of chicken noodle soup, more bread rolls and water, though I must confess I had saved a bit of wine from lunchtime. Fortunately the rain stopped allowing one to enjoy the outdoor facilities of running cold water for the washing of feet and generally sorting out for the next day. Some unfortunates had to cope with trying to sleep in wet sleeping bags.

Sunday, the great day of Pentecost, dawned fine and dry and we were allowed a lie in until wakened at 5.45 by religious music played at full volume over the address system. Preparation and packing were not too bad as we could see better what we were doing, especially for the slow ones found the tents being dismantled around them. Mass began at 7 o'clock and those who had been too optimistic were shivering by the end of it. Breakfast followed with the luxury of the bread rolls having been sliced and smeared with jam and with a choice of coffee, chocolate or tea (so called). The only snag was that 15,000 people all wanted it at the same time.

Our spot was not so far back today but it was still getting on for 10 o'clock before we set out. The day was dry but overcast and not so warm as the previous one - good conditions for walking which was as well for we had another 22 miles to cover. It was a long slog and the effort was taking its toll. There are support teams at 2km intervals manned by the French equivalent of St. John's Ambulance and they were kept much busier than on the Saturday. Transport is provided for those who have reached their limit. Remember that the pilgrims were motivated by religion rather their love of walking and there were many who needed treatment for blisters. Lunch was similar to the previous day and in the woods at St. Benoit.

Later in the afternoon the rain came again. There was a prolonged shower followed by a shorter one but it finished and we had the pleasure of arriving at the camp at the delightfully named 'Gas' in a dry state at the respectable time of 8 p.m. Nevertheless there had been some very muddy stretches and the ground was wet. The atmosphere was much more relaxed than the night before and those who had been in doubt now thought there was a chance of survival. The facilities were of the same nature as at the other camp. It is worth commenting here that most of the French participants were youngsters, with scouts and guides well represented. It is difficult to get precise figures but there were originally 20,000 who registered although not all would do the full distance. Apparently 16,000 had to be accommodated in the camp that night. Although this is mainly a French event there were 700 others including groups from Eastern Europe, United States and Australia.

Another early start on the Monday was followed by breakfast taken as and when one surfaced thus avoiding the scramble of the previous day. Today we were one of the leading groups so set forth just after 7 a.m. This is an act of generosity by the French in allowing the foreigners to be first into the Cathedral at the end of the march whereas not all of the others would fit in.

We had only 15 miles to walk today and by lunchtime most of that was behind us. The weather was fine and lunch in a large field was a happy occasion with the remains of the sandwich fillings being shared to give a little variety. The field had lain fallow and the only drawback was that there was a covering of thistles. One wag suggested that the purpose was to inflict some suffering on the only part of the body which had so far escaped.

Having completed the remaining miles we were in the Cathedral shortly after 2 p.m. but it was a long time before all the others were in. All seating had been removed and we had to make ourselves as comfortable as possible on the stone floor in whatever space we had. With stiff aching joints that is not easy. Musical entertainment and support for the Mass was provided by an organ, 20 piece orchestra and a choir of 60. It was well after 6 p.m. before we were out into the open air again.

After collecting our bags we returned by coach and overnight ferry with a stop at the Hotel Ibis in Chartres for our first hot meal since Friday. It is great credit to the hotel that they were prepared to accept such a bunch of bedraggled specimens hobbling and limping into their establishment. The walking may not have been up to LDWA standards but it was a reminder of times when that was the norm and the long columns of marchers with many flags and banners gave the whole event a medieval aspect.

Many thanks to Laurie for his article. I am indebted to a Mr. D.D.C. Pochin Mould for the illustration, taken from his book "The Mountains of Ireland", published by Batsford in 1955. The book is dedicated to "St. Brendan of Clonfert, Mountaineer and Sailor". Brandon Mountain and Brandon Bay are named after him and he is believed to have discovered North America in the 6th Century A.D. - see Tim Severin's book "The Brendan Voyage".

I had been awaiting something called "In St. Cuthbert's Footsteps" from Mary Hatcher but I gather from Paul she would have had great difficulty with soggy quills and parchment so Bill Gillibrand's contribution admirably filled the 'pilgrimage' spot.

NEW BALANCE, FLIMBY, CUMBRIA

I must start by saying that I and LDWA Kent cannot make any recommendation or endorsement of New Balance products. Having said that, those of you who still have amemory (it's said walkers need short memories otherwise they would probably never enter another event) may recall an article published under the above heading in the August Newsletter of two years ago. During the May previous to that publication I bought from New Balance's Factory Shop a pair of New Balance 585 shoes for walking at the special price of £14.95 as they had a suspected fault with the adhesive used to glue the sole to the upper. The normal price was around £70 so I took a chance that they would last for a while. The adhesion was in fact faulty and within a few weeks the sole had partially parted company with the upper on the left shoe only. However with a liberal application of a contact adhesive they have since had no problem. Because they were sold as imperfect I have not used them for walking but have worn them at work.

I have worn these 585s, which are made in England, for around eleven hours a day, five days a week, since May 1996, except for holidays, which the mathematicians among you will find is quite a long time!

The tread is now thin (having been used mostly on a concrete factory floor) and the uppers are covered with oil, etc. The insides seem little affected; one lace has broken. Otherwise they are fine. They have been comfortable since day one. From my experience I have found them to give long life and comfort and I look forward to many more years of use.

For what it is worth that is my knowledge of a particular pair of 585s. If you would like more information concerning the location of New Balance and don't have the August 1996 newsletter please contact me on [REDACTED].

BRYAN CLARKE.

No, we don't advertise in the Newsletter but Andrew Boulden is on the look-out for potential sponsors who could help to defray our costs on the Millennium Hundred. Do give him a ring on [REDACTED] or chat to him on a walk if you can keep up, if you have any ideas, contacts or helpful suggestions.

Tom S.

THE MACMILLAN WAY

Boston to Chesil Beach

Day 1 : Saturday 13th June : Boston to Surfleet-Seas-End (14 miles)

I caught the train from Bexley in Kent at 07:22 to arrive in Boston, Lincolnshire, at 11:14. After obtaining a signature from the ticket office at Boston station and the station stamp in my book, thus confirming my appearance, I started the intrepid trek from Boston. with all my worldly goods on my back (about 30 lbs), as I was doing the Way unsupported. However, I was staying at B&Bs on the route - thank goodness for them !!

The wind was very strong and chilly - unfortunately straight at me !! Several miles of the path were very overgrown. This made it extremely tough even though the route was flat. It made running very difficult so I decided to walk - I had no choice ! I managed to get to the B&B just before the heavy rain.

The notable view was of the Boston Stump - this is the major church building in Boston. You can appreciate why it is called the Stump when you see it. I was chased by a herd of bullocks (30+). Obviously young as they took no notice of my 'Rawhide' expletives. They just kept on coming. I had to take refuge over a barbed wire fence and stayed there until they decided I was not interesting enough.

Olga and Rick gave me a great welcome at the Ship Inn, Surfleet-Seas-End. They made me feel just like one of the family. This obviously gave me a real positive outlook for the rest of the journey. There was a sign in the pub - 'Due to a public water shortage the beer will be served at full strength. The prices will reflect this.' A pub that openly admitted watering the beer, whatever next !

Day 2 : Sunday 14th June : Surfleet-Seas-End to Ketton (30 miles)

The day started off misty - from the sea. The ground was very wet underfoot and like the day before, very tall and tough to walk through. It was also very wet. I was soaking from the feet up to my thighs. My waterproof socks - which I rate highly - got water in over the top of the sock and so my feet were swimming in water. My rucksack became too bulky and heavy - it was biting into my back. I had to work out how to resolve this issue, which, fortunately, I did - basically by re-packing it.

On my way to Kate's Bridge I was chased by a stallion from one stile to the next - now I know why I do 'fartlek' training ! - only to be confronted by a bull. I chose to go back, this time around the field to avoid the stallion. I then went on the road looking for another entrance onto the river bank. I succeeded in this and with only a mile to Kate's Bridge I was again confronted by a herd of bullocks. It was when they started to jog towards me that I decided that 'discretion was the better part of valour' and so turned and fled. Like yesterday, the route was basically flat.

The church at Surfleet is just like the leaning tower of Pisa, but not as large. The old part of Stamford town is very attractive as are the villages of Ketton and Easton-on-Hill.

Day 3 : Monday 15th June : Ketton to Desborough (30 miles)

The day started with a downpour just before I set off - does this mean once again wet feet ?? Unfortunately this proved to be the case. I am getting wetter upwards. The rain is having minimal effect but wet ground is becoming an obsession.

THE MACMILLAN WAY

Boston to Chesil Beach

Within a half a mile I was, once more, confronted by a herd of bullocks gaining momentum towards me. I turned tail and ran - much to the amusement of the farmer. The tracks are gradually improving but the farmers do not make the paths a yard wide - thus leading to wet feet again !!

The most notable period was running around Rutland Water and it was great to arrive at Oakham to start the second and final book.

Whilst eating an evening meal at the Little Chef it rained very heavily - deep joy, wet feet again tomorrow!!

Day 4 : Tuesday 16th June : Desborough to Farthingstone (30 miles)

Ran along a disused railway track for a good distance - heaven, no wet feet ! I went through a couple of long tunnels. They were pitch black - all you could see was the light at the end of the tunnel. Wouldn't we all like to see that these days ?

Again there have been some very attractive villages - Great Brington, Little Brington and Farthingstone. The tracks are much wider and firmer. Mrs Bryce, of Old Glebe Farm (B&B) got the local parish to make the paths wider for 'her walkers'. In fact the area has been very good for running/walking. This has been the easiest day so far.

Day 5 : Wednesday 17th June : Farthingstone to Long Compton (31 miles)

What a day !! A good start but within an hour there was rain all day - at times, torrential. I was drenched several times, and going through the long grass and fields - once again I got wet upwards.

The only memorable view was from Edge Hill - really superb. However, there may have been other views of note but weren't apparent in the heavy rain. In the torrential rain whilst walking uphill I met a young bedraggled woman riding an unhappy horse. As she got within 5 yards of me I started singing 'Always look on the Bright Side'. At least I saw a sunny smile.

It was an early night for me as I was coming down with a chill. The proprietors of the B&B, Mr & Mrs Cunningham (she came from New Eltham many years ago), were excellent. Without their support and concern I doubt whether I would have continued.

Day 6 : Thursday 18th June : Long Compton to Duntisbourne Abbots (29 miles)

Unfortunately, it rained all day. Wet feet certainly make it a mental struggle. For one period I couldn't see very far due to the rain mist and my specs were steaming up - so I ran/walked without wearing my specs. It was that bad !

Two places of note and both worth a revisit - Stow on the Wold, a lovely little town with, normally, great views, and Lower Slaughter, a really attractive village with a slow lazy river meandering under very basic stone bridges.

THE MACMILLAN WAY

Boston to Chesil Beach

Day 7 : Friday 19th June : Duntisbourne Abbots to Castle Combe (30 miles)

What a difference a day makes ! After a cloudy start the sun gradually peeped through. It then developed into a glorious day so much so that my forehead caught the sun - I felt dehydrated. The route is now becoming more hilly - however, still gentle especially compared with the White Peak 100 !!

The places that interested me were Tetbury - where I stocked up with first aid goodies as my right ankle started to 'play up', and Westonbirt Arboretum, not far from Badminton.

Castle Combe was my resting place for the night. This must be the most attractive village in the country and so laid back. The evening was spent with the Mac (the B&B proprietor) sitting in the village square talking to all of the locals. What a way to spend your life ! Mac and Hilary made me feel very welcome. So much so, I will return.

Day 8 : Saturday 20th June : Castle Combe to Bruton (44 miles)

Due to the distance I had to cover I left at 05:30. the conditions were ideal. However, it soon started to rain - for approx. 3 hours. The views were once again spoilt. Once it stopped raining the sun came out - it became very hot. I decided to pop into Frome to obtain liquid refreshment but had difficulty finding the Macmillan Way again.

Nunney Castle is definitely worth a visit. Running past it does not do it justice. The climb through Kings Wood Warren was the most demanding so far, but the views through the trees were certainly worth the effort as was the magnificent structure - Alfred's Tower.

The last few miles were very hard even though they were basically downhill. This was due to the heat. I felt as if I was becoming dehydrated. So the town of Bruton was indeed most welcome. I 'attacked' the drinks cabinet of the local shop with vigour.

Douglas Macmillan, the founder of the Cancer Relief Macmillan Fund went to Sexey's School in Bruton.

Day 9 : Sunday 21st June : Bruton to Evershot (34 miles)

The best day yet - hot but with a cool breeze. I made sure that I carried several drinks as, it being a Sunday, there would be few opportunities to see an open shop.

The views from Corton Ridge made the whole trip worth it. I could see for miles - thanks mainly to the clear skies. The last section before bedding down at the Acorn Inn, Evershot (this was mentioned in Tess of the d'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy) was through Melbury House. This was a long drag which just kept on going upwards. The house was really beautiful.

There was a boggy section just after Sherbourne which was exceptionally wet so I retraced my steps and took a detour via Thornbury. It took me ages to get back on the Macmillan Way. The local parish do not keep their footpaths clear.

This section has been the hilliest so far - but still nothing like the Peak District.

THE MACMILLAN WAY **Boston to Chesil Beach**

Day 10 : Monday 22nd June : Evershot to Chesil Beach (18 miles)

Another good start to the day. I covered the ground quickly. Was it because the adrenaline was flowing - I was going to complete the Way ? I met a pack of Foxhounds jogging towards me. They covered the whole of the lane. The dog handler stated that there were just over a 100 of them.

I got drastically wrong just after Compton Valence. For the first and only time the instructions did not tally with the situation. However, a compass bearing soon got me back on track.

Even though I was tired I am convinced that the most demanding section of the whole route is within the last 10 miles. You certainly know you've had to work hard.

What a great sight Abbotsbury is !! Only a couple of miles to go. To finish on the stones of Chesil Beach is a great feeling after 290 miles in 10 days, with a pack on your back. I do feel proud of what I have achieved. Now to collect the sponsor money !!

I caught the bus from Abbotsbury to Weymouth just in time to catch the 13:50 to Waterloo Station. After a couple of pints at the Railway Tavern, Bexley, I arrived home at 18:30.

The end of an unforgettable 10 days !!!!!!!

Summary :

The route description as detailed in the two booklets developed by Peter Titchmarsh from the Macmillan Way Association was excellent. I only wish that all off road events were as well described. However, I was glad that I took the relevant Ordnance Survey Maps with me if only for the comfort factor.

The Macmillan Way is not a tough nor spectacular route but it is demanding, not only because of the distance, and extremely pleasant with many good views and places of interest. The booklets highlight interesting information to many of these places. This is another extremely good reason for obtaining the booklets, plus they also contain invaluable information regarding accommodation - a necessity.

I must thank all of the runners/walkers who helped me with my training/preparation for this event, especially young Fiona King who has put up with me for several events.

As my father commented, "I did this to commemorate my 50th birthday !", so he's looking forward to what I'll do for my 60th !!

Merv. Nutburn

(MERV NUTBURN)

OUR RIGHTS (AND OBLIGATIONS) OF WAY

Most of our Public Rights of Way (PROWs) were registered as such in the 1950s when Parish Councils provided local knowledge for the Register of Footpaths and Bridleways. The definitive maps to be found in Public Libraries are usually the most up-to-date record of PROWs or, perhaps not quite up-to-date, are the excellent OS Outdoor Leisure Maps.

The input by parishes explains how a path can finish on a Parish boundary with no continuation into the next Parish as happens in several places in Kent. These "Parish Paths" had evolved over centuries to provide important routes (when most people travelled on foot) between farms, churches, schools, villages etc. Now these paths are used mostly for recreation and are defined and protected by statute law in the same way as other highways maintained at the public expense. Some paths have become derelict because of changing patterns of use and may not have been walked for many years but they are still valid Rights of Way. However there are paths which have been created, with others diverted or extinguished since the original registration.

The network of Public Rights of Way is nowadays mostly accepted without much thought, but lots of work has gone into this network and we should use it correctly without causing others irritation. Please remember that invariably PROWs cross private land and in the countryside this land is an important part of the agricultural industry.

With this public right of way go obligations to respect the countryside and those who live and work there. Observe the Country Code, always keep to the route of the path (don't forget that grass is a crop), leave gates as you find them (however if in doubt contact the nearest farm), dogs should be kept under close control at all times and preferably on a lead (remember that cattle, especially, are excited by the sight of a dog and can then be a nuisance).
BRYAN CLARKE.

My thanks to all contributors particularly Keith Warman for the front cover drawing and Shirlie Gill for the photos on page 11 and the back cover (CAPTIONS are invited for that one). Excitable cattle seem to have featured quite often in this issue but generally I find that walking without a dog and not too briskly even large bulls, including the two splendidly horned specimens, complete with alpine-style bells, which I encountered near Stanstead recently, behave well if you talk nicely to them.

Dates for your Diary:-

Kent Group A.G.M.	Sunday 23rd January 1999.
Sevenoaks Circular Marshals' Walk	First Sunday in March 1999.
National A.G.M. in Scarborough	Second weekend in March 1999.
Sevenoaks Circular	Third Sunday in March 1999.

STOP PRESS: LETTER ON LDWA CONSTITUTION ETC. ENCLOSED
COMMENTS A.S.A.P. Deadline for next issue 3.11.1998. Tom.

