



# LDWA Surrey



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## Some background to the Founders Footpaths Anytime Challenge

The Long Distance Walkers Association was founded by Chris Steer and Alan Blatchford in January 1972, but its origins go back further. In 1960 Alan Blatchford, then the Outdoor Organiser of the Epsom and Ewell YHA Group, organised the Tanners Marathon, the first challenge event in the south of England, so called because its start and finish were then the Tanners Hatch Youth Hostel. In 1966 Chris Steer chanced to see a small notice in a window of the Post Office at Peaslake. It read: 'Tanners Marathon - 30 miles in 10 hours. Write to Alan Blatchford'. He did, and so their association began. Little did he know at that time that he was walking into history. Alan died in 1980, Chris in 1992. Barbara Blatchford is now a Vice President of the LDWA.

There are four memorials in Surrey to Alan and Chris. In return for substantial donations from the memorial funds the National Trust designated, in 1982, an area of the North Downs scarp and crest north of Abinger 'Blatchford Down' and, in 1994, a large field on the escarpment north of Dorking 'Steer's Field'. Both are on the North Downs Way. A seat outside the Tanners Hatch YH is dedicated to Alan. A toposcope on Pitch Hill erected by important landowners, the Hurtwood Control, with the help of a contribution from the LDWA Surrey Group, bears a plaque 'In affectionate memory of Alan Blatchford (1936-1980) and Chris Steer (1919-1992) Founders of the LDWA'.

The Founders Footpaths visits all four memorials and also the old Post Office in Peaslake (now Peaslake Cycle Hire).

Tony Youngs, an early member of the Surrey Group, devised the route shortly after Chris's death. It was first walked in April 1995 by Surrey Group members, and subsequently used by the London Group for its Founders Jubilee Challenge in October 1997.

It is offered as an ongoing Anytime Challenge under the Recordership of Elton Ellis.