

LDWA SUSSEX GROUP NEWSLETTER – WINTER 12/13

Welcome to the LDWA Sussex Group Newsletter for the purpose of communicating what activities the Group and individual members are participating in and also to raise general interest in walking associated activities. We would welcome any comments and contributions to help with future editions.

GROUP NEWS

The Annual General Meeting took place on Thursday 31st January. Here is the Chairman's Report for 2012:

The Walks.

Including the London and Christmas walks the total for 2012 reached 20, Due to the bad weather 2 were cancelled and 1 was abandoned The attendance, as always, was variable but averaged 10, an increase from 8 in 2010 and 9 in 2011. My thanks to Trevor Beeston, the Walks Organiser, for an interesting program.

Challenge Events.

Only one in 2012 - the South Downs Marathon (SDM) on 1st April.

A re-run of the successful 2010 event, based at East Dean, the route crosses the Seven Sisters and passes through Exceat, Litlington and Norton then over The Downs to the checkpoint at Glynde. The return is via Firle, Alfriston and Jevington - 28 miles in all. The day was cold but the sun shone and this event once again proved a success. 116 entered, 103 started, 1 retired - the best numbers yet for the SDM. The next SDM will take place on 7th April 2013. Full details can be found on the Group website - ldwasussex.org.uk.

The KSS Challenge Walks.

The Kent, Surrey and Sussex Challenge comprises of three 50 mile walks, The White Cliffs 50, the Surrey Tops and the Sussex Stride, each walk taking place once every three years.

Badges and certificates are awarded to those completing three successive walks and this has proved popular with walkers who enjoy the extra challenge of 50 miles. The KSS has been extended to those completing six or even nine walks, in groups of three.

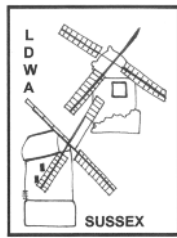
The group provided marshals for the White Cliffs 50 which took place on 22nd & 23rd September 2012. Our checkpoint was located on top of the cliffs overlooking Dover Harbour on a rare dry day. With the adjacent NT centre providing a cafe and toilets an ideal location! The Sussex Group's event, the Sussex Stride, takes place on 21st & 22nd September 2013.

Thank You.

Many thanks to the Secretary, the Treasurer and ALL the members of the Committee for their hard work and support in 2012 and for their attendance at the various meetings throughout the year. Special thanks to all who marshalled on the SDM and White Cliffs 50 - without you these events would not be possible. My thanks, on behalf of the Officers and Committee, to all of you that participated in any of the walks or events. We hope you enjoyed yourselves and look forward to seeing you again.

Good Walking.

Chris Baines-Holmes



A warm welcome to David Hodge who was elected onto the Committee. Members of the Committee for 2013 are as follows:

- Chris Baines-Holmes (Chairman) T: 01273-772076 E: chrisbainesholmes@btinternet.com
- Shirley Greenwood (Treasurer)
- Anthony Mitchell (Secretary) T: 01342 – 811361 E: anthonymitchell@btinternet.com

- Gillian Aitken
- Kay Armstrong
- Trevor Beeston – (Walks Organiser and Newsletter editor) T: 07816-108373 E: beestont@aol.com
- Chris Coates
- David Hodge

There still remain vacancies on the Committee. Should anyone like to join please contact either the Chairman or Secretary.

Membership

As you may be aware, it is now possible for the National Committee and your Local Group to send you information via new Bulk email arrangements. These arrangements now supersede the Group's own email package and are based upon a membership list that will be updated nationally rather than locally.

As well as Members having the ability to choose one Group as their Primary Local Group and as many local groups as they wish as Associated members, everyone can also now edit their details and decide their own email preferences:

- LDWA National Email List – *This allows you to receive emails from the LDWA National Committee.*
- Local Group Email List – *This allows you to receive emails from your Local Group.*
- Associated Groups Email Lists – *This allows you to receive emails from other Local Group that you may have an interest in.*

These have been defaulted to 'Yes', but if you no longer wish to have any form of email communication from the LDWA then you can change these to 'No'.

As at 31st January, 130 LDWA members had elected Sussex as their Primary Local Group with 29 nominating Sussex as their or one of their Associate Groups.

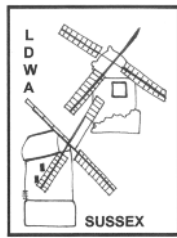
If any member changes their email address please ensure that they log in to the Members Area and update their details.

WESSEX WEEKEND - BOURTON ON THE WATER WEEKEND

Chris and Trevor joined members of the Wessex Group for their annual weekend away in October which this year was based at the HF Holiday's House in Bourton-on-the Water, Gloucestershire deep in the Cotswolds.

The building, Harrington House, dates from the Tudor period and is of typical architectural style of the Cotswolds located in the town centre.

For those from Wessex whose journey from home was not too far there was a 15 or 10.5 mile walk starting at 10am on the Friday morning. For those from a little further afield (Sussex!),



there would be a leisurely(ish) drive and an opportunity to have a look around Bourton before the walkers returned. All were safely back well in time for the bar before the evening meal.

SATURDAY 27 OCTOBER

Given that this was the weekend the clocks went back, it was decided that it would be best to alter the itinerary so that the longest walk would be today. In fact there would be two walks with the longest being 18 miles both starting (and finishing) from the car park north east of Broadway Hill, just off the A44 and on the Cotswold Way.

It was a cold but sunny as we all stood in the car park and for those on the longer walk our footprints would soon be seen in the frosty grass as we climbed the hill to reach Broadway Tower. One or two had a quick look round whilst most marched on. It didn't seem long before we were dropping down into the picturesque village of Snowhill for a coffee break. Unfortunately, it was too early to have a proper drink in what appeared to an idyllic village pub. We would have to wait until we reached the Mount Inn at Stanton. There was slight confusion after lunch when it appeared that three members of the group had "gone missing". Our leader retraced his steps to seek out their whereabouts whilst the rest of the group continued on with a new temporary leader. With the new leader at the helm the group made its way up to the view point by which time the missing trio had been found and eventually re-joined the group. From here it was more or less downhill to reach the village of Broadway described as the 'Jewel of the Cotswolds'. The light was drawing in by the time we got back to Car Park having a good days walk of 18 miles with 765 metres of ascent.

SUNDAY 28 OCTOBER

It would be a cloudier day today for this slightly shorter and easier walk which would start and finish from the accommodation in Bourton. It would be a picnic lunch today but even that didn't exclude a refreshment stop at the Black Horse at Naunton after which we would return to Bourton via the "Slaughters". After the evening meal it would be a third evening for those like-minded types to explore one or two hostelryes in Bourton.

Today's longer walk was 15 miles long and included 305 metres of ascent.

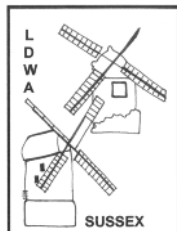
MONDAY 29 OCTOBER

Having had breakfast and cleared the rooms, 20+ stood at the bus stop waiting for the 09.35 to Moreton in Marsh. It was a good job the bus company had been pre-warned of the increased numbers so the driver was not surprised as we slowly boarded. However, the same could probably not be said for the two or three regular passengers whose daily routine would have been interrupted.

On reaching Moreton the idea was to simply walk back to Bourton. This would be by taking a route through the villages of Longborough, Donnington and Broadwell where we stumbled upon a hidden gem -The Fox Inn. Suitably watered, it would be onto Stow on the Wold and once again down through the Slaughters back to Bourton where our cars were waiting to take us home.

An excellent weekend away with our friends from the Wessex group. Particular thanks to Michael Godfrey who did the organising and all those that contributed to putting the walks together (which probably meant that they had to reccy all the pubs in advance!).

Trevor Beeston



CHALLENGE EVENTS

Next Event - Sussex Stride

As mentioned in the Chairman's Report, this tri-annual event (and part of the KSS triple challenge) will take place over the weekend of 21st and 22nd September. This is a 51 mile route with a time limit of 20 hours starting from Longhill School, Falmer Road, Rottingdean, BN2 7FR. Details of how to enter are available via the website and will be shown in the April edition of Strider.

GROUP WALKS

Past Walks

On the back of the wettest April to June on record the weather during the second half of the year didn't really get that much better. It was therefore quite remarkable that a number of our walks took place on days that bucked the trend. It was cloudy, dry but very humid for the walk taking in the classic South Downs Way Loop at the beginning of July. This was followed by a walk from Forest Row on a bright and sunny day. We hit one of the hottest days of the summer (if not the hottest) for the walk "Meandering Around Midhurst" and with temperatures not far off for the first of two walks in celebration of the LDWA's 40th Anniversary from Storrington. It was also dry for the second of the celebration walks from Friston. See below for write up's on both these walks.

By the time we got to the beginning of November, the weather had definitely taken a turn for the worst. The seven who turned up at Balcombe station as the hail stones pelted down were in for an interesting time as the paths turned to rivers. Another successful Christmas walk in December closed the year. One thing that is apparent after 2012 is that Sussex is saturated!

Unfortunately, 2013 commenced with the abandonment of the annual London Walk (report below). It was a good call in the end given that another belt of snow moved in. We were not the only Group to cancel a walk over that weekend!

Thank you for all those that participated and particular thanks to all those that agreed to lead a walk and the work they put in to produce interesting routes.

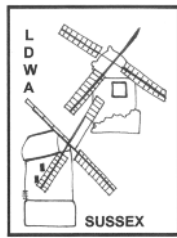
Trevor Beeston

40th Anniversary Walk Part 1 - Arundel - 8th September 2012

How often is a social walk planned around the walk leader's need to buy some new walking trousers? Perhaps this was not really the case in this instance, but he certainly did buy the trousers in Arundel at the lunch stop.

There were seven walkers in total plus Ben, the dog. One walker had not walked with the group previously so quite what he thought when he was presented with a 40th anniversary badge at the start of the walk, we will never know!

The walk proceeded in an easterly direction despite the fact that Arundel is due west of the starting point. We followed the South Downs Way initially before heading south to cross the



A280. We then walked through Clapham Wood to Clapham Church. The man cleaning the Church offered dusters to those who wished to help him. The Church has a memorial to the poet, Shelley, and tiles designed by William Morris, so was an interesting place to stop for refreshments.

We then crossed the A280 again and walked through the village of Patching. The next section passed through the Angmering Estate being wooded this was most welcome as the temperature had risen significantly. It was surprisingly muddy in places. We then walked through Warningcamp and south along the river to Arundel.

In Arundel we went our separate ways for lunch (the leader, of course, to buy his trousers!). From Arundel we headed north through Arundel Park with its magnificent views. There was a steep climb and by now it was very hot. When Ben leapt into a water trough to cool off, did I detect a look of envy of the faces of one or two of the walkers? We then descended to the river, during which time Ben proudly brought back one of the Duke of Norfolk's pheasants, perhaps his lordship would not have approved.

We followed the river to Houghton and then picked up The South Downs Way again. We used the drinking stop kindly provided for those doing The South Downs Way before climbing Rackham Hill and heading back to the car park.

The temperature had been higher than was comfortable but there had been excellent views of the beautiful Sussex countryside and the walk appeared to have been enjoyed by all.

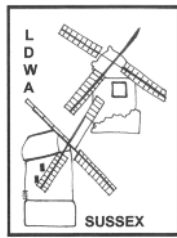
Anthony Mitchell

40th Anniversary Walk Part 2 - A Celebration of the ancient villages and hamlets of E. Sussex – 30th September 2012

The second anniversary walk to celebrate the LDWA's 40th anniversary took place on Sunday, 30th September, starting at 8.30 a.m. from Butcher's Hole car park at the edge of Friston Forest near Friston on the Jevington Road. Eleven people turned up, a mixture of old timers and relatively new members who had not walked with the group before. The theme of the walk was to celebrate the ancient villages and hamlets nestling in the Downs in this part of E. Sussex, and the walk was designed to visit ten such settlements, many mentioned in the Domesday Book testifying to a thousand years of recorded history.

The first part of the walk took us through Friston Forest, past the ancient Jacobean mansion of Friston Manor, and onwards for 2 miles through woodland tinged with the mellow colours of early autumn foliage, to our first hamlet, West Dean. Today West Dean is tiny hamlet nestling at the edge of Friston forest, almost a secret and forgotten village due to its relative inaccessibility. However, in early Saxon times West Dean, probably founded as a fishing and salt producing settlement, was of much greater importance as it was accessible by river. There is evidence to suggest that King Alfred had a palace here and in 1305 King Edward I visited West Dean from nearby Lewes. In later times a large Elizabethan Manor stood in the centre opposite the church. Several of the old houses now remaining have incorporated some of the Manor House ruins and the medieval dovecote has recently been restored to its former splendour. The 13th century parsonage, built of flint with narrow trefoiled windows, had until a few years ago the reputation of being the oldest, continuously inhabited rectory in the country. The beautiful church of All Saints is the most ancient in the Cuckmere valley.

Our walk from West Dean picked up the South Downs Way as we continued through the Forest and then across fields to the rustic village of Litlington in the Cuckmere valley, affording fine views of the White Horse across the valley as we descended to the old, flint-stone houses of Litlington. Litlington boasts a fine pub, a beautiful old church and some delightful Edwardian tea gardens, but we proceeded without stopping as we had more than



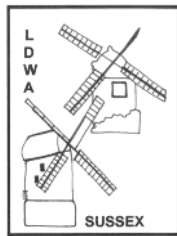
five miles to cover before the next village. We took a footpath which led us down to the river, across the bridge and then gently through the Cuckmere valley, where we were delighted to see flock after flock of wild geese flying majestically overhead, reminding us of the seasonal change. A short climb took us up the shoulder of High and Over. Here we risked life and limb by crossing the road to Frog Firle and so on to the long, sweeping ridge which eventually joins the South Downs Way at Bopeep car park. However, we turned off before this, joining a track called the 'Green Way' which descends into the valley before a long, steady climb towards the South Downs Way ridge. From there it was a pleasant descent through woodland and down an ancient sunken track to our next village – Alciston. Alciston is now a sleepy village nestling at the foot of the South Downs just off the busy A27 road, but this belies an ancient history. The village is mentioned in the Domesday Book and in medieval times the lands were owned by the Benedictine monks at Battle Abbey. There is still evidence of the wealth of the church during this period. Alciston boasts the largest tithe barn in Sussex and possibly in the country. This flint stone building dates from the 14th century and is still in use as a barn, a magnificent L-shaped building with fantastic timber roof beams and 50,000 roof tiles! Nestled among ancient farm buildings next to the church is a partly restored medieval dovecote (apparently 120 nesting boxes out of the original 700 survive). After the Reformation the land was given to Sir John Gage from nearby Firle. As we had made good time, we stopped to visit the simple but beautiful old church situated on a mound and surrounded by a picturesque graveyard.

From Alciston it was a mile's walk across fields to Berwick. Here we stopped to visit the church made famous by the Bloomsbury artists Duncan Grant, Vanessa Bell and Quentin Bell, who painted a series of wonderful, vivid murals in the nave walls, chancel arch, screen and pulpit – both religious motifs and country life scenes. Another unique aspect of this church is the fact that the windows have clear glass, allowing the charming Sussex landscape to be exquisitely framed with many different light effects depending on the weather. Also, one of the best views of rolling Sussex downland must surely be afforded when you leave the ancient churchyard and rejoin the footpath leading to Alfriston. This view seems to symbolise all that is lovely about this part of the world.

From Berwick we followed a route very familiar from our annual Christmas walk, reaching the picturesque village of Alfriston by about 12.30, having completed a distance of 11 miles. Here we had an hour's lunch stop. Most people preferred to picnic on the village green overlooking St Andrew's church, the cathedral of the Downs. The medieval Clergy House adjacent to the church with its ancient beams and thatched roof is now a visitor's attraction (the first building to be acquired by the National Trust). Alfriston deservedly has the reputation for being one of the quaintest and most picturesque villages in Sussex with its main street lined with ancient flint and timber-framed buildings, and the spire of its church a well-known landmark in the Cuckmere valley.

We set off again about 1.30 p.m. taking a footpath which took us through the tiny hamlet of Winton Street, boasting some very ancient flint and thatched cottages, to the road and the Cuckmere River. Having crossed the river, we took a diagonal footpath which led us through the valley to Milton Street, another hamlet very much off the beaten track, where the Sussex Ox pub is situated. From here it was less than a mile to the ancient village of Wilmington, the footpath affording us splendid views of the Long Man on Windover Hill, looking to all intents and purposes like a prehistoric long distance walker with his two long poles!

Wilmington boasts the remains of an 11th century Benedictine Priory, a cell for the Benedictine Abbey at Grestain in Normandy. At one time there was a cloister connecting the abbey to the church, where the monks used to worship. The medieval remains have now been incorporated into a historic building owned by the Landmark Trust which buys up heritage buildings and lets them as self-catering properties. The best way to appreciate the architectural splendour of this ancient building is to go on the Landmark Trust website to view the interior. We had to make do with peering over the garden wall! Another part of ancient



history is to be viewed in the churchyard, namely a massive yew tree reputed to be about 1600 years old and therefore one of the oldest in the country. If only trees could speak! Hoping that we had been blessed by our contact with this sacred tree, we proceeded uphill on what feels like an ancient bridleway (now part of the Wealdway) to the tiny hamlet of Folkington. Although only 2 miles from Polegate, Folkington maintains the illusion of being miles from anywhere, but again boasts an ancient history going right back to the Domesday Book. In medieval times when the broadcloth industry started in Sussex Folkington was famous for producing teasles, used to process wool. In the 1600s the famous herbalist Nicholas Culpepper resided in the village. There has been a Manor House here since time immemorial with some illustrious inhabitants. For example, in the early 1300s the owner of the Manor, Viscount Monckton, became adviser to King Edward III, and the Monckton family held the Manor for many generations. In the 1960s Lady Monckton introduced the Badger Protection Act! More recent owners included the distinguished Gwynne family, one of whom became Mayor of Eastbourne in the early part of the 20th century. The current Manor House is an impressive, flint stone Victorian mansion but nearby is the much older, Jacobean Wootton Manor House. Today David Dimbleby has made Folkington his home, although we didn't run into him!

We were disappointed that the ancient 13th century church of St Peter's was closed, but we admired the extravagant architecture of the huge rectory opposite, a truly gothic creation! After a brief stop, we proceeded along the Wealdway, now a sunken track which was once a coach road linking Jevington with Wilmington. We reached our last village, Jevington, after a couple of miles and enjoyed a brief rest in the churchyard, surely one of the prettiest in Sussex! We walked down from the church to the road, past the Hungry Monk restaurant, which is now sadly closed. We then joined the South Downs Way for the slow pull up to the ridge, thankful that this was our last climb.

From the top of the ridge it was a pleasant walk with sweeping views of the valley, Friston Forest and the sea in the distance. Eventually, as we neared the outskirts of East Dean village, we joined Old Willingdon Road with its huge mansions and manicured lawns before descending through a field to Friston Forest. Another mile and we were re-united with our cars, twenty miles and 10 Sussex villages under our belt! We were also grateful that after days of wet, windy and thoroughly unpleasant weather, we had enjoyed a dry and reasonably warm day. All walkers were able to take home a specially produced badge to mark the 40th anniversary of the LDWA.

Gillian Aitken

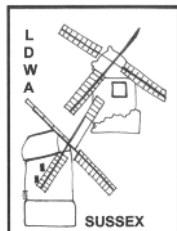
Christmas Carol Walk - 9th December 2012

20 walkers gathered at Alfriston car park some wearing various headgear in the true Christmas spirit with Helen Smith and Gillian Aitkin leading. A bright winter's day, cold but dry, we walked briskly along the bank of the River Cuckmere to Litlington up past Clapham Farm and down through Charleston Bottom where unbeknown to us the mud lay in wait. climbing up to Lullinton Heath we were rewarded with tremendous views. Leading on down through Litlington we made our way to Berwick Church a stone's throw to The Cricketers. After fueling with meat and ale we sang Christmas carols under direction of Shirley Greenwood. Glasses were raised and a toast to Les Smith remembering fond memories of over 20 years at the Cricketers.

Helen Smith

What Happened To The London Walk January 2013? - The Best Laid Plans.

Providing a decent Social Walk in the short days of December and January has always provided a challenge for the Sussex Group. The 12 mile Christmas Walk, with a large lunch and carols in the pub, took care of December but January, with the post New Year



depression and frequently foul weather proved more problematic. Quite unexpectedly a possible alternative to the winter countryside presented itself - courtesy of Her Majesty the Queen.

One hot summers day - remember those? - in Southwark in 1988, I had escaped from the office for a stroll along the south bank of the Thames. At that time there was no Globe Theatre and the Tate Modern was a disused power station. I came across a metal disc set into the pavement bearing the legend 'Silver Jubilee Walkway 1977'. After an extensive search through most of the tourist offices in central London - no Google then - I located a rare copy of the guide.

Opened in the year of Her Majesty's Silver Jubilee, the route, about thirteen miles, covers all the tourist haunts between Lambeth and Tower bridges. So in January 1994, amid some scepticism, the first Sussex 'London Walk' took place. Some 42 people turned up at Victoria station so...but that's another story!

Since then other routes have been followed. The Thames Path, in sections, from Hammersmith to the Barrier, the Parks walk - surprisingly colourful for January - and many variations of the Jubilee Walk itself.

In late 2011, on a tour round the Olympic building site with the Blue Badge Guides, an idea was born - could the Park provide the focus for the January 2013 outing? My involvement in the London100 caused me to visit the area several times. However, because of the security measures little could be done about route finding round the Park until after the Paralympics had finished. The only information about the site, post Olympics, was that some areas, used for customer access to the Park, would be released back for public use 'sometime in December'. The Park itself would not be open to the public until at least 2014 - or later.

Despite numerous visits to the area no suitable route presented itself. Going to the east, via Stratford with its newly created Temple of Mammon and good lunch facilities, was too long. A more easterly track was better but the views of the Park were very limited whichever route was followed. Only a very short part of the newly reopened Greenway, near Pudding Mill Lane, provided any sort of vista.

Much has been done to improve the infrastructure in the area, resulting in many new roads - good for the traffic but not for the walker. Most of the pubs in the area do not serve food on Sundays - the two eateries on the edge of Victoria Park which fitted the timing were both packed to the rafters at Sunday lunchtime.

The final nail in this particular coffin was the planned engineering works on the Brighton Line for every weekend in January. Additionally, London Bridge mainline station is being rebuilt and on some Sundays trains have been diverted, unannounced, via Blackfriars. So, with great reluctance, the walk was cancelled.

Hope, they say, springs eternal. The route to and from the Park is interesting - at least for those, like me, who enjoy walking in London. If it could be combined with a traverse of the Olympic Park itself the walk would be viable. So watch this space and perhaps, in say 2015, I will have another go!

Pathtrekker.

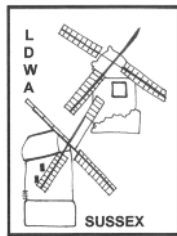
PS. Sunday 20th January 2013 turned out very cold and snowy. It was an ill wind.....

FUTURE WALK PROGRAMME

The programme of walks until the end of August is now available and can be accessed via the LDWA main website, the Group's website and the relevant editions of Strider:

DID YOU KNOW?

South Downs Way



Not only was 2012 the 40th Anniversary of the LDWA it was also 40 years on from the official opening of the first section of the South Downs Way (SDW) for 80 miles linking Eastbourne with Buri-ton on the Hampshire Border. It was not until the 1990's that the extension to Winchester was officially opened making the total length of just over 100 miles with about 4,150 m (13,620 ft) of ascent and descent. Indeed the route of the South Downs Way has provided six LDWA 100's including the very first one.

A great deal of the SDW is along chalk downland and much has been done over the years to maintain and improve the path as well as enhancing the experience for those using it.

The question now is what will the next 40 years bring? Historically, National Trails have been funded by national government through Natural England and the Countryside Council for Wales, and also by local highway authorities and other funding partners. However, this looks like it is going to change given a 30% cut in central funding with a move to setting-up local trail partnerships. Hopefully there will be a smooth transition. We will see.

And Finally.....

LeJog 2012. Filling in the gaps

I reported a year ago on my journey from Land's End to Bath. This year I went back for a few days to fill in the gaps.

This time I took the car in mid June and stayed for 3 nights in the Westward Ho! youth hostel. This is self catering but there are several pubs in the town. I used the car and bus to do the first day from Boscastle to Bude, the second day from Bude to Hartland. On the third day I just needed to get the bus to Hartland and walk back to Westward Ho! Weather was reasonable and not too hot. Some of the cliff paths were a bit too up and down so I used some minor roads to bypass the cliffs. On one occasion the road was so narrow that I had to almost climb into a hedge to avoid a large tractor and trailer.

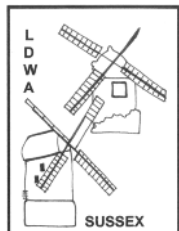
In 2012 I had been intending to do another 300 miles or so from Bath northwards but as I had volunteered for Olympics duty and been accepted I could only spare the 3 days fill in. In the end I did 37 days in a warehouse near Star Lane DLR station. We were checking people's passports against information on a database and issuing security badges. Fortunately my daughter lives in London so I was able to travel up Wednesday morning, stay 2 nights with her, and travel back home on the Friday evening. We processed some 200,000 people between April and August, mostly in June and July so at times there were long queues. It was a great experience though, well worth doing.

David Hodge

Pennine Way – Part 2 Hawes to Kirk Yetholm

It was with some disappointment that on a sunny Sunday morning back in 2009, I had to make a left turn at Hawes to pick up a train from Garsdale station and head home. However, come 2012 it was time to re-trace my steps and head back to Hawes in an attempt to complete the Pennine Way all the way to Kirk Yetholm. It wouldn't be like doing it all in one but this would have to be it.

Thanks to our great railway network it nearly didn't happen. The train broke down south of Peterborough. At one stage we were even heading back south! It was not until 9.30pm that I finally reached a dark and damp Hawes but at least I was there and back on schedule to



kick-off the next day. Paul was waiting in the pub nursing a pint of Theakstons XB having completed the first 105 miles from Hawes. He was doing the lot in one go having secured an injury three years previous.

It was still raining for the walk out of Hawes to the first destination – The Tan Hill Inn. The haul up Great Shunner Fell felt longer than I recall from the last time I had tackled it. This was probably due to the fact that nothing could be seen ahead but sweeping cloud full of moisture. Then as the path descended the cloud started to clear and Swaledale came in full view. A welcome stop was taken at Twaite. This turned out to be the only lunchtime stop en-route to enjoy a beer! A tricky little path then took the “Way” via Keld and then on to the well double-glazed Tan Hill Inn for the evening.

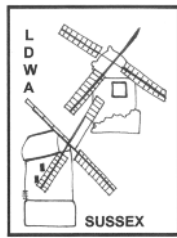
The next day looked reasonably fine over head – but certainly not underfoot. Immediately the so-called path entered the wet and boggy land of Sleighthome Moor. Progress was very slow. This was probably the worst section of a “named” path that I had ever encountered – up to this point anyway. Things improved a little as the A66 approached but deteriorated again across Cotherstone Moor. Trying to avoid the worst patches became the norm but ultimately pointless. This would remain a feature for the rest of the Pennine Way but not surprising perhaps given that there are large tracts of moorland further north and given the record rainfalls. It all seemed to be forgotten once dried off and eating in drinking in Middleton.

It was a good day to cover the next section from Middleton to Duffton which has been recorded to be one of the best sections on the whole of the Pennine Way. This is hard to challenge as we pass the waterfalls of Low and High Force, Cauldron Snout and High Nick Cut.

One of the best sections is followed by what some say can be the hardest – particularly in poor weather. Luckily the conditions were good and after the long push up to Green and Knock Fell spectacular views were had all the way via Great Dun Fell and Little Dun Fell to finally reach shelter and the top of Cross Fell. This was also a Saturday and the top of was pretty busy! Downhill all the way from here along a never ending long stony path (named Corpse Road!) to Garrigill. The one pub in the village turned out to be a good ten yards from the B&B. Some concern was expressed because a table had not been booked for food. No worries though given that the place was empty – apparently just about everyone from the village was at a wedding in Alston!

It was back to wet boots for the next section to Greenhead. Having picked up provisions at the new petrol station outside Alston, we reached Slaggyford a name that proved very apt. A pub at Knaresdale proved tempting but we really couldn't afford to take time to wander slightly off-route. Much more enjoyable was both legs sinking into the bog at Blenkinsopp Common! We just caught the B&B owner on his way out to walk the dog when we reached Greenhead. Things didn't sound so good as the Greenhead Hotel had reported a very busy evening ahead and there could be problems getting served. However, thanks to our host for the night a short car lift to the Black Bull in Haltwhistle proved to be a winner.

Bellingham would be the target for the next day. I assessed that around 7 ½ miles (although I have read 10 miles) would parallel the Hadrian's Wall National Trail during which we would pass more walkers than at any other time. The sun was out and the short but steep ascents and descents along the line of the Wall would slow the pace down. Just before Housesteads the path heads north across a mix of moorland and forest. Marshy and boggy as usual.



The cloud was low and there was dampness in the air as we left Bellingham and headed north once more towards Byrness. The map indicated that the route would pass through some marshy ground. Having heard the night before that mountain rescue had recently been called out to pull a lady from the bogs, there was some nervousness as to whether we would reach the next road crossing. It was therefore quite a comfort to spy three walkers coming towards us – thus must have got through! However, we were warned that the next section may be difficult in parts and, in their view, impassable only two weeks ago. Given this and reading that the next section around Brownrigg Head and Black Hill were probably the worst section on the whole of the Pennine Way, the nervousness set back in. Again slight relief set in as we could see other walkers in the distance. They were three Germans that were attempting the section between Kirk Yetholm and Dufton so yet again someone had got through. Once down from Black Hill, the Way follows a Forestry track all the Way.

Two nights were to be spent in Byrness. No pub but a great bar in the lounge with three ales on hand pump! Unless you are camping there is no place to stay between here and the end. The plan for the next day would be to walk to a half-way point and be picked up by car and taken back. Following a hard climb out of Byrness, a clear day provided fantastic views as the route eventually followed the border between England and Scotland. The final highlight of the day would be the cairn at Windy Gyle before descending off-route to the pick-up point.

The weather was disappointing for the final thrust towards Kirk Yetholm. Walking in fairly dense cloud with a reasonable wind blowing on top. It was not until the Pennine Way offers a high or low level alternative did the cloud start to dissipate and a great view to behold. The high level route was taken which had a sting in the tail. This was a steep climb up White Law before descending onto the road that leads to Kirk Yetholm.

I had heard that you only get a free half pint at The Border Hotel, Kirk Yetholm if you do the whole Pennine Way in one go. I said to the barman that I had done it in two. He seemed in a happy and generous mood today and the half was consumed. A rewarding end to quite a challenge given the conditions.

For several sections of the Way we met up with Peter. Following his ambition to complete the Pennine Way, Peter has written a book of his experiences (including some of ours!) and is aptly named – *A Pennine Way Odyssey – An account of a journey during the wettest British Summer on record*. All proceeds from the sale of the book will go towards sustaining the All Aloud Singing Group being a group for disabled people.

Trevor Beeston