

Long Distance Walkers' Association

SUSSEX GROUP

<http://www.ldwasussex.org.uk/>



NEWSLETTER

August 2016

1. Group News

Our AGM was held on 27th April at the Sussex Ox, Milton Street, and was preceded by a short walk. The Minutes and other formal documentation may be viewed via the 'Committee' page of the Group [website](#).

During the six months since publication of the previous newsletter there have been Committee meetings on 28th April and 28th July, each held at The Trevor Arms, Glynde. Changes have been made to the membership of the Committee, and to some individual roles, in line with the decisions made at the AGM:

LDWA Sussex Committee, July 2016

Chairman:	Trevor Beeston
Treasurer:	Shirley Greenwood
Secretary:	Gillian Aitken
Challenge Events Organiser:	Chris Baines-Holmes
Walks Organiser:	Manfred Engler
Webmaster:	David Hodge
Newsletter Editor:	David Weatherley
Member:	Chris Coates
Member:	Anthony Mitchell
Member:	David Nash

There still remains a vacancy for one more Committee member. Please contact either the Chairman or the Secretary if you are interested in helping your local Group.

2. Challenge Events

LDWA South Downs Marathon – 15th May 2016

The Numbers

182 entered, 128 started, 120 finished. Entry to the event was opened on 1st April with a limit of 150 and entries on the day. So good was the response that the limit was raised to 180 with no entries on the day. The new limit was reached in the last week of April. Despite this apparent enthusiasm for the event 54 (29%) of entrants didn't turn up.

	Runners		Walkers	
Entered	77	42%	105	58%
No-shows	23	29% of entered	31	29% of entered
Started	54	70% of entered	74	70% of entered
Finished	53	8% of starters	67	91% of starters

The no-shows appeared fairly evenly spaced across the period during which the entry was open.

The Weather

Unlike last year we were blessed with good weather, dry, sunny periods and a light but chilly breeze. Underfoot the ground was dry – ideal conditions for both walkers and runners.

The Route and Checkpoints

The only change to the route this year was the re-location of the second water-point from Chapel Hill to Plonk Barn, less than a kilometre back along the route, thus depriving the marshals of the

benefit of spending several hours in the lee of a large heap of malodorous manure. In an attempt to relieve the pressure of the increased number of entrants at the Glynde checkpoint the jam and marmite sandwiches were replaced by a range of 'nibbles'. While the runners found this acceptable the walkers did not, so the sandwiches – or something as substantial – will return next year.

East Dean Jubilee Hall – the Walk Headquarters

The main hall at East Dean continues to provide a large and well equipped base for this event. This year the smaller hall was occupied by a 90th birthday party which also had use of the single kitchen. By the time the Birthday Boy and his guests required tea the supply of beans on toast and fruit and rice to our clients was under some pressure. Both kitchen teams managed to work round each other but competition for the single high-speed dishwasher became intense (it is much used to keep a good supply of those oh-so-appreciated china plates and cups available).

The hirers of the hall now require users 'to protect the floor from mud and other debris'. Instead of covering it with plastic sheeting (an expensive and time-consuming option) 200 pairs of rather fetching white overshoes were purchased. As the ground was so dry very few were used, the remainder will be available for the Sussex Stride in September. Another first this year was the use of the Group's 'corporate wear'. This comprised royal blue T-shirts with the Group logo on the front and 'LDWA SUSSEX' in gold on the reverse, (almost) the colours of Sussex. The kitchen staff had aprons of similar design.

To prevent our clients from filling up the car parks outside the hall the Group hires – at considerable expense – the field next to the car parks. As the weather was good and a birthday party was taking place the car parks were full by lunchtime and all and sundry started using 'our' field. Perhaps there is a revenue opportunity here.....



Corporate wear modelled by our Webmaster

Conclusion

A successful event, thanks to the hard work by all the marshals and helpers. We were able to demonstrate that we could accommodate the increased number of participants. We were lucky with the weather and I recommend that we continue to hold this event in the middle of May.

Chris Baines-Holmes, Challenge Events Organiser.

Forthcoming Challenge Events.

Sussex Stride

24th & 25th September 2016

The Stride is the third part of the KSS Triple Challenge, the others being the Surrey Tops and the White Cliffs Challenge, the latter organised by the Kent Group. The events rotate on a three-yearly basis and, at 50 miles, each counts as a qualifier for the LDWA 100 mile event. Entrants successfully completing three events on the trot reach the Bronze Standard, six on the trot the Silver and nine the Gold.

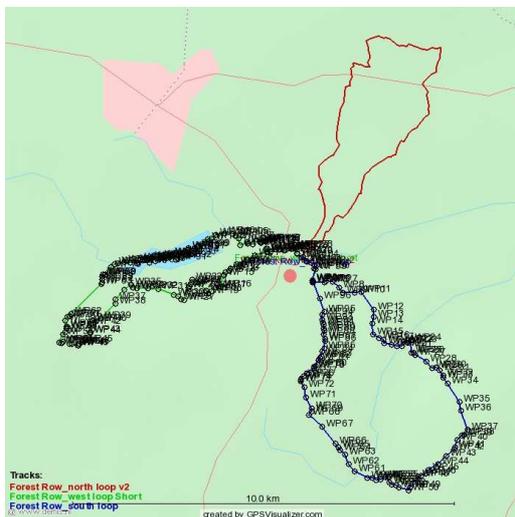
The entry limit of 150 was reached in the middle of July and the list is now closed. The smooth and trouble-free operation of an event like this requires plenty of helpers and at this stage we are in need of more people willing to give up a few hours of their time to assist with marshalling duties. The time 'window' for the Stride starts at 7.30am on the 24th and ends at 6am on the

25th. If you feel that you could help or would like to discuss what's involved please contact me via chrisbainesholmes@gmail.com or 01273 772076.

Chris Baines-Holmes, Challenge Events Organiser

New Challenge Event

We are continuing to develop a new Challenge event intended to be held two years in every three, i.e. each year except those in which the Sussex Stride is held. The route will comprise three loops, each of around 10 miles, with entrants offered distances of 10, 20 or 30 miles (i.e. 1, 2 or 3 loops) in a variety of Sussex scenery. It is planned to use the village hall at Forest Row as combined Event headquarters and main CP at the node of the three loops, plus intermediate mobile CPs providing basic refreshments close to the half way point on each loop. This arrangement will enable us to mount a 30-mile (maximum) Challenge event with CPs at approximately 5-mile intervals whilst requiring only a modest amount of support.



It is intended that the event will be included in the LDWA programme for the autumn of 2017. Candidate northern, western and southern loops have been identified, heading in the general direction of West Hoathly, Cowden and King's Standing (Ashdown Forest) respectively. During the next few months we will be finalising routes, writing and verifying route descriptions, assessing options for parking and so on. We would be very pleased to receive offers of help from Sussex Group members!

It remains to choose a name for the new event; suggestions to date include 'Sussex Sampler', 'Sussex Spokes', 'Spokes of the Weald' and 'Rampion Ramble'. Perhaps you will be able to suggest something better??

Finally ...



Congratulations go to four Sussex Group members who recently completed their first LDWA 100-mile Challenge:

Jane, Rob & Steve - Red Rose 100 (May 2015)
Manfred - Dorset 100 (May 2016)



3. Group Walks

2016 Social Walks Programme as at 1st August
(Check the [website](#) to confirm details of future walks)

Date	Walk	Start	Miles	No.
03/01	<i>First of the year</i>	<i>Firle</i>	12	5
30/01	<i>The great parks of London - revisited</i>	<i>Regent's Park tube</i>	10	13
13/02	<i>Wander from Washington</i>	<i>Washington SDW CP</i>	18	6
27/02	<i>Walk and AGM</i>	<i>Milton Street</i>	10	13
13/03	<i>Maresfield meander</i>	<i>Maresfield</i>	19	20
26/03	<i>Round Rotherfield</i>	<i>Rotherfield</i>	19	13
10/04	<i>Meander to Chiddingly</i>	<i>Abbot's Wood CP</i>	19	14
23/04	<i>Jerome's Chailey tour appearance</i>	<i>Scaynes Hill</i>	20	26
07/05	<i>SDM highlights</i>	<i>East Dean</i>	21	22
11/06	<i>Fairlight Country Park - and beyond</i>	<i>Hastings</i>	20	9
26/06	<i>Eight Bells and all's well</i>	<i>Polegate</i>	20	9
09/07	<i>Martello meander</i>	<i>Seaford</i>	20	10
23/07	<i>Flying from Firle</i>	<i>Firle Bostal</i>	20	13
06/08	Wealden wander	Heathfield	21	
20/08	Whither Winchelsea	Westfield	20	
10/09	Sussex Stride marshals' walk	Longhill school	51	
17/09	Lewes, Ditchling, Falmer figure of eight	Lewes	19	
02/10	Ashdown Forest Circular*	Visitor Centre	20	
15/10	Senlac 950	Ponts Green Chapel	19	
06/11	Mayfield - Burwash circular	Mayfield	17	
19/11	1066 reversed - Battle to Pevensey	Pevensey or Battle	17	
03/12	Jerome's winter woodland appearance	Horsham	19	
11/12	Christmas Walk & Lunch	Alfriston		

*Organised by the Sussex Group for the Wealden Walking Festival. Participation is only via the Festival website

Summer 2016 Half-Year Review

The first half of 2016 has passed already. In some ways it feels that the year has only just kicked off – maybe because we spent so long waiting for a prolonged period of warm (or even hot!) spell of weather to reassure us that summer is really here? On the other hand, it feels a long time ago that our 'First of The Year' was abandoned due to the exceptional strong winds and heavy rain making it difficult to open the car doors at the top of Firle Beacon!

I don't know whether it's me but the January date we choose each year to commute north to London for our annual walk in the capital always seems to turn out to be fine and crisp, with a fair amount of sunshine. This year was no exception as we revisited the Great Parks. Always interesting. The only spanner in the works is getting there by train. Keep to Saturdays as Sundays are just about certain to be affected by 'improvement' works and with the ongoing works to London Bridge Station journey times can be protracted. However, I personally hope that we can continue to put on this walk going forward.

Our walks do tend to lean towards East Sussex given that this is where most of our active members are located. Our first walk in February 'Wander from Washington' however, was one of just two walks this year starting in West Sussex.

For the first time the Committee decided to move the AGM away from a dark, cold weekday evening to a weekend and combine it with a morning walk. The hope being that we can persuade a few more people to become more actively involved but most importantly let them have their

say – and enjoy themselves. It was pleasing therefore that 13 turned up to do a 10 mile circular walk from the Sussex Ox car park at Milton Street. At 12.30pm it was back at the pub for drinks and lunch followed by the formal business of the AGM in more 'informal' surroundings.

It was suddenly March and the first walk of 'spring' saw 20 people turn out for the Maresfield Meander. A lovely sunny day for quite a challenging walk over difficult terrain with a good number of small hills and some boggy and muddy ground to test the resolve. The second walk that month, 'Round Rotherfield', also turned out to be a bit of a boggy one but a great route via Mayfield, Five Ashes, Skippers Hill and Jarvis Brook pleased the 13 that turned out.



Our two walks in April were well attended, particularly Jerome's walk from Scaynes Hill which attracted 26 attendees. The record high in recent years. We were pleased to report that this was Jerome's 150th walk he has led for the LDWA. It was just three years before that he led his 99th walk from Harting for us followed by his 100th a week or so later for the Wessex Group.

Fast approaching was the South Downs Marathon. Before this we again put on the SDM 'Highlights' walk. It avoids two of the checkpoints on the main event but includes sections such as the Seven Sisters, High & Over and Wilmington Hill. This has proved to be a quite popular walk so hopefully we can continue to put this on in future years.

June and summer was supposed to be here. It had been sometime since we last started a walk from Hastings so it was good that Dave Strachan was happy to lead his first walk for the Group out through the villages of Fairlight, Icklesham and Pett. Our second walk this month was the Polegate Circular. Kindly led by Clare this took a route out via the Cuckoo trail to Abbot's Wood then the Vanguard Way to Chiddingly. The Six Bells is always worth a visit!

The first walk in July was led by Paul on an overcast day with an occasional glimpse of the sun; dry and not too hot - ideal walking weather. The group of 10 included some newcomers, one of whom had joined the LDWA the previous day, and all enjoyed a route that took in parts of the South Downs unknown to some regulars. The final outing of the month was Sima's 'Flying from Firle'. A group of 13 stormed up Windover Hill on a hot and humid morning. Lunch in Alfriston provided energy sufficient to tackle High And Over and then, after a descent to the tea room at Charleston Farmhouse, to ascend the ridge on return to Firle Bostal.

Trevor Beeston

4. Miscellany

The Tale Of Reg's Balls ...

... memories of 2009, when the Sussex Group helped organise the Wessex 100 ...

Not everyone appeared to appreciate the Kit Check...

The idea of the Check is to ensure that everyone carries the minimum kit necessary for their own safety, in compliance with the Rules (and to satisfy the LDWA event insurance requirements). The Committee decided that we would have one, and volunteers were found, mainly by using the Tent Squad marshals during a quiet period between erections. A check at Registration would have been too easy to get round, so it was set for just before Checkpoint 4.

Reg Chapman offered to sort out the hardware (Reg's 'Balls in a Bag') and listed 8 items of kit, each needed to comply with the event rules, on a set of ping-pong balls. The plan was that each entrant passing the Check would pick a ball from the bag, and produce the relevant item. In a stroke of genius, Reg marked each of the two spare balls (having bought a pack of 10) with 'Free Pass' which, if drawn, enabled the walker to pass straight through. This enabled the marshals to weight the draw, so when there was a low frequency of entrants these balls could be removed and everyone would have to produce an item of kit. But if there was a rush of entrants, as happened several times, we could replace the 'Free Pass' balls and remove two others, so that fewer walkers would have to stop and be checked. This worked well, and allowed us to minimise delays to participants. Special thanks were due to Martin Lawson, the 'Voice of the Balls' from BBN Group, who handled the bag of balls with panache and made the Check enjoyable for the marshals, if not so much for walkers.



The majority of entrants took the check in good spirit, and there was a lot of banter. One lady was quite abusive, as she had apparently had a long day, and was asked to produce her compass from the depths of her First Aid kit, at the bottom of her bag. A few 'yellow cards' were issued and two entrants could have been disqualified: one runner had a very minimalist view of what constitutes warm clothing and if the event had been in the mountains, or the weather had been bad, we would have stopped him; one young chap was shocked to find that his maps were not in his bag – he must have left them somewhere by mistake (we believed him) - but the marshals were able to find a spare 'centred' map, which was donated to him, and he carried on and finished in a good time.

The marshals really did not want to disqualify anyone, only to reinforce the Rules and to ensure entrants' safety. Despite that, we heard later that one entrant was seen to collect a rucksack from a car just before the East Dean checkpoint, and drop it back in the car after leaving the hall – so she was walking through the night without the majority of her kit. Whatever you do, people will bend the rules. Luckily there were no major incidents. Several people got lost, one Sweeper used his whistle to attract help when a walker was off track during the second night, and one person was taken to hospital to be kept under observation for a couple of days, due to salt imbalance, but subsequently recovered.

It will be even more important for entrants to carry the essentials, such as both warm and waterproof clothing, map, compass and whistle, etc. in Yorkshire next year as the route will be very different with long sections of the 100 in remote areas. No doubt Reg's Balls will be available, if the organisers want them!

Chris Coates

The England Coast Path

For many years it has been possible to walk around the entire south-west peninsula, from Minehead in Somerset to Poole in Dorset, on the 630-mile South West Coast Path. There are also footpaths along substantial stretches of the coasts of Sussex, Kent, Essex, Lincolnshire and Northumbria but in a large number of areas, for example in parts of Suffolk and Norfolk, pedestrian access to the coastline has to date not been permitted. A change in the law now provides for the legal right to explore our coast for the very first time and forms the basis for negotiations between landowners, user groups and other interested parties on the one hand, and Natural England (the government's advisory agency) and DEFRA on the other. It is intended that the conclusion of this process will be the creation in 2020 of a new National Trail - the

England Coast Path - that will be one of the world's longest coastal walking routes, with a total length a little more than that of the famous Pacific Crest Trail. The most recent section of the new Path, opened earlier this month, is here in the south-east; a 66-mile route running from Camber in East Sussex to Ramsgate, Kent.

The predicted length of the completed English Coast Path is 2,795 miles and it is tempting to speculate how long it would be were it to follow the actual coastline, perhaps along the high water mark, but the answer would be 'well, it depends upon how you measure it'. Determining the length of a country's coastline is not as simple as it first appears because the it has 'fractal' characteristics, i.e. similar patterns recur at progressively smaller scales; an ever-shorter ruler would measure more of the sinuosity of bays, inlets, rocks, pebbles, grains of sand and so on, so that the measured length would continue to increase. This is the so-called 'coastline paradox': the length of the coastline of a land mass is not defined, but is a function of the scale of measurement.

"Ticking off another one" - Part 2

Not content with 'ticking off' mountains, hills, summits and county tops in the various categories listed in the Winter 2015 Newsletter, some people go a little further. Rob Woodall of Peterborough has recently achieved his target of becoming the first person to visit each of the 6,190 trig points that were put in place 80 years ago by the Ordnance Survey. His quest has taken him from Lizard Point in Cornwall, the most southerly point on mainland Britain, to the island of Unst in the Shetlands. He has climbed to the highest trig point on the 4,413ft summit of Ben Nevis and visited the lowest one, approximately 3ft below sea level aside the Little Ouse in Norfolk. His quest ended when he ticked off the last one on the list atop Benarty Hill in Fife.

Mr Woodall has earned himself a place in the book *Dull Men Of Great Britain*, alongside such greats as Kevin Beresford, a roundabout enthusiast, and John Richards, who runs the Apostrophe Protection Society.

Whilst on the topic of eccentricity ...

... forget GORE-TEX®, eVent® and the like. Buy tweed.

The recent United Kingdom vote to withdraw from the European Union might be an opportunity to consider what constitutes national identity. If so, English members of the walking fraternity could perhaps choose outdoor clothing to copy that worn by a 1920s role model for English heroism, the man who many in the mountaineering community believe was the first to reach the summit of Everest. Mansel Fletcher says of George Mallory that

"Mr Mallory embodies the qualities his compatriots believe define their race: amateurism, bravery, the ability to look good in tweed, and dignity in the face of disaster."

"More energy bars, vicar?"

Free b&b accommodation is being made available for long distance walkers passing through the Sussex Group domain, but only if they are pilgrims. No, not *bed and breakfast ... bench and Bible*.

In mediaeval times the concept of pilgrimage was understood and accepted as normal by English people from all walks of life, young or old, wealthy or poor. The wealthy made their way to

Palestine, Rome, the shrine of St. James in Compostella, or perhaps to the German cities of Cologne and Aachen wherein lay relics purported to be those of biblical figures. Pilgrimage was a time-consuming and risky business, so they sometimes took the easy way out and paid others to undertake the journey on their behalf. Those of humbler means journeyed to English holy sites such as Canterbury, where Thomas à Beckett was martyred, and Walsingham, the site of an apparition of the Virgin Mary.

The people of Sussex would have been accustomed to seeing pilgrims travelling through the area, sometimes singly but usually in groups. The Star Inn in Alfriston was once a pilgrim hostel providing bed and board to those journeying to the shrine of St. Richard at Chichester. Establishments in Rye, Winchelsea and other south coast ports did the same for those travelling to shrines in Spain and further afield for which the usual routes involved daytime travel by boat hugging the English coast as far as the West Country before braving a crossing of the westerly Channel; this was a risky undertaking but less so than overland continental travel where the threat was that of robbery or worse at the hands of local brigands.

In recent times the popularity of pilgrimage has increased substantially; for example each year thousands of people make the journey on foot to Compostella from a variety of distant starting points within continental Europe. In this secular age it is debatable whether the typical traveller on the Camino, clad in a lightweight waterproof shell atop a highly wicking technical base layer and a micro fleece, is undertaking his or her journey as a spiritual quest to obtain supernatural help or as a form of penance for sins, as once was the case. Interestingly pilgrimages were banned by Thomas Cromwell in 1538 because they had become less a spiritual journey, more a tourist industry!

Within this country around thirty new pilgrimage routes have been opened during the past ten years and those such as St. Cuthbert's Way (Melrose Abbey to Lindisfarne), St. Michael's Way (Lelant to St. Michael's Mount) and the Pilgrim's Way (Winchester to Canterbury) are very busy for much of the year. Moving closer to home, within the last year Anglican authorities have considered making available churches for passing pilgrims to camp inside (an arrangement known in the tourist industry as 'champing') and a pilot scheme has been launched in Sussex backed by the Rev Peter Owen-Jones, BBC presenter and vicar of Glynde, West Fittleham and Beddingham. Under the scheme a select number of rural churches will open their doors to those walking the South Downs Pilgrims' Way, the most recent new route that is being developed by the British Pilgrimage Trust and that runs 240 miles from Winchester to Canterbury through the heartland of LDWA Sussex territory.

Perhaps each of our walk leaders might consider making use of this facility to 'champ' overnight before his/her walk and to spend the night in prayer for a rain- and mud-free morrow ...

5. 'Your Walk'

Alas Poor Keswick.....

Late last year an opportunity arose to spend Christmas week away from the hustle and bustle of Brighton. The Lakes were the preferred area and Keswick the chosen location. Accommodation was booked. plans laid – a few days walking, low level if the weather was bad, good food and better company – what could go wrong?

Ten days before we were due to arrive Storm Desmond passed through, leaving parts of the town flooded, bridges damaged, roads destroyed and the fells very soggy. A hasty call to the letting agency confirmed that the accommodation was 'dry' and the town up and running - 'please don't cancel' was the plea.

The river Greta skirts the northern edge of Keswick, following the old Penrith Road in from the east, turns north west then loops round the industrial estate and the Pencil Museum to take a south westerly route behind the bus station, before joining the River Derwent. Our arrival in Keswick coincided with a storm – although the floods had subsided the rain had continued since Desmond’s visit. Our accommodation was in the ‘B&B/self- catering’ area of Keswick, south of the Penrith road and about fifty yards from the still raging river. Indeed, the limit of the flood had been about three yards from the house and the Greta could be viewed from the upstairs bedroom.

Our first trip into town revealed the extent of Desmond’s wrath. In the immediate area around the Conservative Club stood the sad piles of ruined white goods and sodden carpets. Fitz Park, across the Greta, was still partially flooded. The cricket and football grounds were ruined. Opposite the YHA – also flooded – stood a great pile of boulders, dragged from the river to ease the flow. The Greta doesn’t do mud, only rocks.

The centre of Keswick, around the Moot Hall, is on higher ground and was spared. At the western end of the town the rugby ground and bus station had been flooded. The large grocer’s store – Booths, the Waitrose of the North West – had been inundated and customers were being bussed to the Penrith branch. A tiny ‘pop-up’ grocery shop was opened within the main store just before Christmas. Derwentwater was still full and the wooden jetties used by the Keswick launches submerged. No fell walking this week, then – the state of the roads and bridges too uncertain, even in this information age.

We squelched around locally and took to the busses, visiting Penrith and the western towns. We have had many happy holidays in Keswick and were saddened by its plight. But, however desolate it looked it was most certainly ‘open for business’.

Keswick Revisited ... back we went at the very end of April. The white goods were gone but behind some of the ‘no vacancies’ signs the de-humidifiers still rumbled. The cricket and football pitches had been re-seeded and Booths reopened, restored almost to its former glory. Most of the roads were open and the bridges repaired and the town was full of visitors. Reasonable weather and five days walking on the Fells made for another good holiday. Here’s to the next time!

Pathtrekker

The Orkney Islands

If you were to travel about 750 miles south of London you would end up in the balmy south of France, a holiday choice with popular appeal, but if instead you chose to travel due north, you would reach a destination which is nearer to the Arctic Circle than the south of England, a place where English is spoken but where the culture is unique and perhaps closer to Norway than mainland Scotland. It is a place where a limited number of tourists go due to its geographical remoteness, but those who make the journey will almost certainly be touched by the magic of the place and I suspect that many, like me, will wish to return. I am, of course, talking about the archipelago of 70 islands, most of them uninhabited, which form the Orkney Islands.

I have now visited Orkney twice, each time arriving by a small plane from Aberdeen, breathless with excitement and perhaps a small degree of apprehension as the north of Scotland was left behind and the green and fertile Orkney islands came into view far below me, the plane circling over the more rugged island of Hoy and passing the harbour town of Stromness before swooping down to land in the charming airport of Kirkwall situated on the coast a few miles west of

Kirkwall, the largest town and administrative centre on what is termed 'the Mainland', in effect the largest island in the Orkneys. The alternative would be to catch the overnight ferry from Aberdeen to Kirkwall (ferry then steamship on to Shetland) or to catch the ferry from Scrabster on the north coast of Scotland to Stromness. In the summer a smaller ferry plies the short crossing between John O'Groats to the most southerly island of South Ronaldsay.

Kirkwall is a very pleasant town with a historical centre of mostly 17th and 18th century buildings dominated by the sandstone cathedral of St Magnus, Britain's most northerly cathedral. My preference, however, was to stay in the harbour town of Stromness, about 20 miles due east of Kirkwall and scenically situated in a sheltered bay overlooking the small island of Graemsay with the mountains of Hoy island looming up dramatically in the distance. Stromness has always been an important harbour due to its sheltered location and it was from here that the Hudson Bay Company recruited adventure-seeking or poverty-stricken young Orcadians to work in Canada, Stromness being the last port of call before the long Atlantic crossing to Arctic Canada. Franklin's ships HMS Erebus and Terror filled up with fresh water from Logan's well in Stromness in 1845 before embarking on their ill-fated expedition to discover the North West Passage. The famous Arctic explorer John Rae who was discredited for finding out what really happened to Franklin's unfortunate sailors, and who himself discovered the true North West passage, was born on the island of Graemsay.

Today Stromness still retains its ancient character with its long, winding main street along the shore bisected with quaint alleyways or 'closes' climbing up steeply behind the town. The harbour is still colourful and busy with fishing boats and smaller ferries serving Hoy and Graemsay, while one of my favourite sights was the majestic Northlink ferry 'Hamnavoe' steaming at an impressive speed along the Sound of Hoy before docking in Stromness. The town can also boast a most interesting museum, an art gallery, a modern library overlooking the harbour and the Stromness Hotel, a comfortable Victorian hotel overlooking the harbour, unchanged in character from when it was first built and where I stayed during my first visit to Orkney. Stromness is also a magnet for artists, writers and musicians. The famous but reclusive Orcadian poet John Mackay Brown (1921 - 1996) lived and died in Stromness and earlier this year the world mourned the loss of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies who fell in love with the Orkney islands, moving there in 1971 and making his home in Stromness.

Orkney's ancient history of settlement is never far away. Just a few miles north-east of Stromness lies the sea Loch of Stenness adjacent to the inland Loch Harray. Standing sentinel at the approach to these lochs are the four sombre megaliths which comprise the Standing Stones of Stenness, built 500 years before Stone Henge, while across the narrow strip of land separating the two lochs is the Ring of Brodgar Stone Circle and Henge, perhaps the most iconic symbol of Orkney's ancient archaeological heritage. Between these two stone circles an archaeological dig, which began in 2003 and is known as the Ness of Brodgar excavation, has revealed a truly astonishing complex of ritual buildings which has transformed our knowledge of the Neolithic world. It is now thought that more than 5000 years ago Orkney was at the centre of a sophisticated belief system with the Ness of Brodgar complex perhaps the most important in Northern Europe. So far only a fraction of the Neolithic structures have been excavated and new discoveries are being made all the time, such as the use of stone slates and coloured pottery.

Nearby lies another of Orkney's treasures, which is Maeshowe chambered cairn built nearly 5000 years ago and thought to be the finest in northern Europe. With truly amazing mathematical skill, the ancient builders have aligned the underground entrance passage with the winter solstice. In the mid-12th century Maeshowe was broken into by Viking raiders who have left graffiti in Norse runes, a legacy of Orkney's Norse past (Orkney actually belonged to Norway between 875 and 1472).

If you follow the coast north of Stromness for about 8 miles you will encounter some of the most impressive coastal scenery anywhere to be found - towering sandstone cliffs, incredible rock

formations (I'm sure a geologist's paradise!), the stunning sea stack of Garthna Geo rivalling the Old Man of Hoy in scale – not to mention the teeming bird life and promise of seals and dolphins if lucky. You will also pass remains of the Broch of Borwick, a legacy of Orkney's Iron Age past when the Picts occupied the land from about 800 BC onwards. Orkney abounds in monuments built in this period, the most famous being Midhowe Broch on the island of Rousay. Eventually you arrive in the curved and windswept Bay of Skail dominated by the 18th century Skail House. Less conspicuous but far more interesting is another of Orkney's archaeological wonders – the Neolithic village of Skara Brae, discovered by chance when a severe storm in 1850 uncovered stone structures beneath the layers of sand. Today you can clearly see the cluster of stone-built houses complete with stone furniture and bed recesses and even passageways between the houses which were roofed to provide cover from the fierce Orkney winds.

One visit to Orkney might suffice to see the more famous archaeological sites and perhaps to explore the Mainland and travel to the southern islands of Burray and South Ronaldsay which are connected by road due to the impressive Churchill Barriers erected by Italian prisoners-of-war to close the access channels after a German U-Boat sank HMS Royal Oak in Scapa Flow in 1939. A further visit will probably be necessary to explore further and visit some of the more adjacent islands to the Mainland, such as Rousay or Hoy, the only really rugged island with scenery similar to the Scottish Highlands, affording some good ridge walking and stunning views on a clear day.

A third visit will probably be necessary to travel to Orkney's northern islands, including North Ronaldsay (with the seaweed-eating sheep!), Eday, Sanday, Stronsay, Westray and the tiny outlying island of Papa Westray (with a name like that, how can you resist wanting to go there!). All of these islands have very few inhabitants but are scattered with ancient remains and would offer peace, seclusion and a truly unique experience, especially if one were to stay overnight. The experience would be even more special in mid-summer with magical light-filled days and abundant bird life for nature lovers. Small planes service all the islands and the flight from Westray to Papa Westray is the world's shortest scheduled flight, lasting only 2 minutes! Ferries also ply between the islands.

My overall impression of Orkney is hard to put into words – endless space and ever-changing light on sea and land, a place where for millennia people have tilled the land and fished the sea and left their footprints on a magical landscape where visitors can take solace in this frantic world. It really is a special place. I will leave the final words to George Mackay Brown (1921 – 1996):

'The essence of Orkney's magic is silence, loneliness and deep marvellous rhythms of sea and land, darkness and light.'

Gillian Aitken

Dorset Dawdle

A short Sussex Group break in May began in Dorchester with an evening meal at The Blue Raddle, a vibrant pub patronised by friendly locals and whose name relates to the former source of the wealth of Dorset. Raddle is a dye painted on to the brisket of a tup and its appearance on the rear end of each of a flock of ewes is evidence of successful mating. It provides an interesting topic of conversation whilst eating a lamb shank ...

Friday

The day dawned warm, fine and sunny, ideal conditions in which to explore a section of the Southwest Coast Path. We set out from the small village of Chaldon Herring, associated not with

fishing but with the Harang family who owned land there in the 12th century. Turning our backs on the Sailor's Return, by repute a fine unspoiled pub well worth a lengthy detour, we tried to banish the thoughts of morning coffee, began walking south-eastwards and continued until we reached the coast at Durdle Door. Here we encountered the expected tourist throng; some were but a couple of hundred yards from their caravan at the nearby park whilst others were looking pleased with themselves, having survived the one-mile trek from the Lulworth car park. Most noticeable were the students seated in groups with their backs to the wonderful view; some looked bored, others were engrossed in smartphones or large portions of ice cream.



Examples of natural erosion ... and Durdle Door in the background ...

Turning westwards we set out along the coastal path towards our lunch stop at Osmington Mills and within a few minutes were alone. The rest of the morning was a roller coaster over terrain similar to the Seven Sisters on steroids. On a couple of occasions as we slowly trudged up the vertiginous slopes we were overtaken by young men running whilst laden with what looked like brutally heavy packs - they were Royal Marines under training. On one occasion we met a couple who were also walking the Southwest Coast

Path; they had started at Minehead and after what they said had been a magical two weeks were close to the end of the Path at Poole.

One 19th century landlord at The Crown at Osmington Mills was Emmanuel Charles, a notorious smuggler said to be an importer of brandy so foul that even the locals refused his offerings. The establishment is now The Smugglers Inn, boasting free WiFi, a 'guest welcomer', an extensive menu and a wine list that includes examples of the products of French viniculture - these days duty paid rather than smuggled. For some inexplicable reason The Smugglers Inn lacked not only an apostrophe but also soup of the day; at the early hour of 12:30 it was declared 'off', but at least the panoramic sea view from the pub was still on the menu.

Throughout the section from Durdle Door we had been treated to a panorama of blue sea, chalk coastal cliffs and, looking rather mysterious in the distance, the Isle of Portland. Now, following a leisurely lunch at the Inn, our eyes were drawn to higher ground as we turned northwards towards Osmington and the South Dorset Ridgeway. We reached the Ridgeway at a point adjacent to the Osmington White Horse, cut into the hillside to honour George III, then turned eastwards along the ridge through terrain that included burial mounds, strip lynchets and other indications of prehistoric occupation and farming, before descending to the sleepy farming hamlet of Holworth. Here our route crossed the site of an abandoned mediaeval village whose house platforms and field boundaries could be clearly seen, then across fields to West Chaldon, once more important than Chaldon Herring but now reduced to a scattering of houses and farms. Twenty minutes later we were back at our starting point after an exhilarating 18 miles.

That evening we ate at The Brewhouse, a Dorchester brewing pub on the site of the Eldridge Pope brewery that closed in the late 1990s. As we walked back to our various places of accommodation it began to rain ...

Saturday

Our starting point was Toller Porcorum where we met Dave Green, a member of the Dorset Group, and Tess, his lovely German Shepherd. Dave had been extremely helpful at the Dawdle planning stage and his subsequent offer to lead two of the walks had been eagerly accepted. We set out from the village along the trackbed of the former Bridport railway through Powerstock Common, a nature reserve noted for its huge variety of wild plants and insects including rare

butterflies such as marsh fritillary and wood white. Butterflies were conspicuous by their absence ... butterflies do not like rain. After an easy mile or so the path left the trackbed and the going became more challenging as we encountered mud as deep and glutinous as that found in The Weald during the rainy season. On reaching Whetley we joined a minor road that climbed steadily to the Iron Age fort of Eggardon Hill - Thomas Hardy's *Egdon* - from where in good conditions the views are spectacular and far-reaching; today we did not linger in the murk but descended south westwards from the summit to North Eggardon Farm, then towards Nettlecombe. After a few yards on the old trackbed at the site of the former Powerstock station we followed a path along an old packhorse route past the remains of Powerstock Castle then into the village for lunch. We arrived shortly before the Three Horseshoes opened and had just enough time to pay a quick visit to the Norman church of St Mary inside which is a mediaeval carving of a king and crowned woman giving bread to children, with outside a 13th century dole table from which charitable doles of bread were distributed to the poor: the village used to be named Poorstock, a reflection of the difficulty of farming in the area. By now the pub was open - the beer proved excellent and the Dorset crab exquisite.

The rain was light and intermittent as we set off towards West Milton where we turned northwards along a lovely valley whose sides were marked by lynchets. At its head we climbed to Spring Hill Farm, then descended to the tiny hamlet of Loscombe before turning northwards to join the Jubilee Trail, created in 1995 by The Ramblers to mark the 60th anniversary of the founding of their organisation. It runs 88 miles across the breadth of Dorset and is included in the register of LDWA Long Distance Paths. The rain increased as we followed the Trail eastwards through North Poorton and we were very soggy when at last we reached the Field Study Centre at Lower Kingcombe. There the silver lining emerged from the dark, rain-laden clouds; it was just after 16:00 and the tearoom, noted for its cream teas, did not close until 16:30. We were warmly welcomed, informed that we were the first customers of the day, then served tea, scones and lashings of jam and cream. Quietly and with dignity Tess accepted the attention of the tearoom staff, together with the biscuits that they offered to her.

A 20-minute squelch from the tearoom took us back to Toller and the end of an 18-mile outing that was very enjoyable despite the conditions, or perhaps because of the challenge they presented.

Sunday

Sunday was sunny and dry. Our destination was the Isle of Portland (Hardy's *Isle Of Slingers*), famous for the stone that has been much sought after, that graces many public buildings in the UK and further afield, and that continues to be quarried today. Its harbour is one of the largest man-made in the world and was until recently an important naval base whose defences included the massive Verne citadel. Huge quantities of local stone were used to construct the Verne and the harbour breakwater that is approximately 5 miles in length.



"Long-eared furry things"

Dave Green and Tess led the way again and one of his first tasks was to instruct us on the correct way in which to alert others to the presence of small mammals in the family *Leporidae* of the order *Lagomorpha*. On Portland one must never utter their common name because of the belief by quarrymen that their appearance presaged a disaster such as a rock fall: they should be referred to as *"long-eared furry things"*.

Our Dorset colleague gave us a fascinating and privileged insight into the history of the Island whilst leading us along a route that took us past a myriad of coastal and inland features. We visited some of the worked-out quarries in one of which is 'Nicodemus knob', a 30-foot pillar

believed to have been left standing to mark the original ground level, walked along some of the inclines and stretches of railways that were built to transport stone from quarries to the port, and saw many and various historic buildings. At Church Ope Cove, the only natural landing place on the Island and by repute site of the first Viking raid on the British Isles, we passed close by Rufus Castle. The original structure is believed to date from Norman times but the remains visible today date from the 16th century when it was built to help defend against the French.

Refreshments were taken in a 17th century building that we visited shortly before returning to our vehicles for the journey home - this was The George Inn, little changed since it was the residence of the court leet in the days when Portland was governed by a manorial court.



During our three days in Dorset we saw sufficient of the coast and countryside to wish to return at some stage for a longer visit. Sincere thanks are due to Dave Green for making the visit such a success and so enjoyable, and to Tess for her friendship.

David Weatherley

The Coleridge Way

LDWA member Lisa and Jeff have moved from the buzz of Hove to the beautiful Somerset countryside. I was therefore extremely delighted, along with Gillian & Joan, to be invited to stay in their new home, a beautifully converted barn. It would be the base from which we would spend three days walking the Coleridge Way, a 50 mile footpath in Somerset and Devon; the route links several sites associated with the romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge starting from Coleridge Cottage at Nether Stowey and finishing in Lynmouth.

Day one and we would begin by driving a short distance to the start of the route at Nether Stowey, where Coleridge lived for three years. Jeff would be our driver for the three days. This would be his shortest journey! Setting off down the main road on a pleasant day we followed a well waymarked path, the symbol for this route being a small feather or quill. The path took us through the quiet and unspoilt fringes of the Quantock Hills through the villages of Holford, West Quantoxhead and Bicknoller which would be our stop for lunch – on a bench outside a newly opened cafe. After this short break sitting in the warm sun we would approach the little known Brendon Hills through to the village of Monksilver. Here we had a welcome break at the pub just as a cloud was opening its contents. The village of Roadwater would be our final destination for the day after 18.75 miles of very pleasant walking. Our driver was there ready to take us back home.

Day two would be slightly shorter in distance but more challenging – or so it seemed. The path changed from easily defined footpaths to more open field and moorland tracks. The walking was tough at times and not helped by the long grass, short but steep ascents, continuous showers and the fact that we took a wrong path on three occasions. It would have helped if we had done our research to establish that the yellow feather meant footpath and the blue the horse riders' path. We did manage to finish just before 6pm having marched through Luxborough, across Lype Hill to Wheddon Cross and the remote Exmoor moorland fringes of Dunkery Hill to the woodland village of Horner to reach finally Porlock. The Royal Oak proved an ideal place to finish and reflect as we waited for our lift.

We were a little anxious regarding the start of the third day's walk. The route description and maps suggested that the first section out of Porlock to Ash Farm would be the most challenging part of the entire route. Yes, there was a climb but the path we took seemed gradual not steep – perhaps we had missed the steep section?! Through Worthy Woods and past Ash Farm the path descended down into the picturesque Brendon Valley and into Oare where we made a small diversion to the Church for lunch. So peaceful. From here the path took a route via Malmsmead and onto Brendon where we stopped for a drink at a delightful pub next to a stream. The remainder of the route would be in the Doone Valley following the East Lyn River towards Watersmeet, before finishing at Lynmouth and celebrating with cream teas all round.

Thanks to Lisa for making it all happen.

The Coleridge Way is a long distance path with some stunning countryside and views; the route is very well waymarked and supported by an excellent route description and associated maps. Details may be obtained via <http://www.coleridge-way.co.uk>.

Trevor Beeston

6. 2017 Dales Diversion

We are considering an early summer break in the Yorkshire Dales next year, possibly based on the town of Skipton from where we could make use of the scenic Settle to Carlisle railway to gain access to adjoining areas for day walks. A typical itinerary would include delights such as Malham Cove, Ingleborough, Attermire Scar and some of the magnificent limestone pavements in the area. If you might wish to join us please enter your name and email address via the link on the 'Home' page of our [website](#) and you will be provided with further details in due course.



Limestone pavement and Penyghent

Thank you to those who have provided material for this edition. Contributions suitable for inclusion in the next (January 2017) edition would be most welcome, as would constructive suggestions for ways in which the newsletter might be improved.