

Long Distance Walkers' Association

SUSSEX GROUP

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



NEWSLETTER

July 2017

1. Group News

An annual report will be included in the next (Winter 2017) edition of the Newsletter, but two recent changes to the Committee are worthy of note:

1. Paul Collis has been co-opted as Group Secretary for the current year.
2. Chris Coates has taken on a new role as the Group's Compliance Officer to oversee Data Protection compliance. He will undertake formal risk assessments as and when required.

LDWA Sussex Committee, July 2017

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

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

2. Challenge Events

Recent Events

LDWA South Downs Marathon – 14th May 2017

The Numbers.

180 entered, 140 started, 134 finished.

The entry limit of 180 was reached a couple of weeks before the event. Entries on the day were not permitted. The no-show rate was 22.2%, an improvement on last year's 29%.

The balance of runners to walkers changed this year – 27 runners and 113 walkers started – last year the figures were 54 runners and 74 walkers. These figures are based on what the entrants indicate when they enter the event – what they actually do on the day is unknown.

The Weather.

Despite heavy rain overnight the day was dry with sunny intervals but windy, particularly along the Seven Sisters. Weeks of dry weather ensured that the conditions underfoot were good, most effects of the overnight rain having drained away.

Route and Checkpoints.

In response to requests from our 'customers', the main checkpoint was moved from the Reading Rooms in Glynde to the recently renovated Village Hall at Firle. This removed the double crossing of the A27. While the Firle venue is bigger than that at Glynde, the internal layout is a bit odd, with the kitchen behind the stage. Despite this the team of marshals at Firle looked after

all and sundry in their usual cheerful and efficient manner. The ‘nibbles’ of 2016 were a distant memory – the sandwiches were back!

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. After the problems of 2016, when we had to share the kitchen with a 90th birthday party, we now have an exclusive use arrangement for the kitchen. The use of china plates and cups and saucers, and ‘proper’ cutlery continues to please our customers.

Conclusion.

This event goes from strength to strength. The route, despite being fairly tough – 4000+ feet of ascent - crosses some of the most beautiful and interesting countryside in Sussex. The service provided at East Dean and the checkpoints is greatly appreciated by all who take part. The real strength of the event is all the hard work and dedication provided by the marshals and helpers. My thanks to them and, of course, to all those who took part.

Chris Baines-Holmes, Challenge Events Organiser.



SDM 2017 Feedback

Zoltan: *"Another fantastic South Downs Marathon. How could I miss the previous 4 years ... Beautiful route, perfect weather, the friendliest bunch of volunteers putting on a quality event. Thank you again!"*

Robert Hickman: *"Please give my thanks to all those involved in today's South Downs Marathon. The weather, the new route and most of all the organisation were all sublime. You should all be very proud to have put on such a great event; and you should know that all your efforts are hugely appreciated. Best wishes and see you next year if not before."*

Pamela: *"I'd like to second Robert's Hickman's thanks and also extend my sincere thanks to everyone involved, without whom those events would not take place. Many thanks for making it possible."*

Geoff Depper: *"Great event. Well done Chris and team. Sussex always were good at these things and the tradition is in good hands! Good to see old Sussex friends."*

Helen Abbott: *"... great event by the way and a friendly welcome on arrival and throughout."*

Brian Coates: *"Many thanks for a superb event. All the team carried out their duties so efficiently with a genuine cheerful disposition. Will watch closely for the entry date for next year's event so not to miss out on more expected fun."*

Forthcoming Events

LDWA Sussex Loops, September 10th 2017

Preparations for the Group's new challenge walk – the *Sussex Loops*, based on Forest Row – continue apace.

Routes for all three loops are now settled. Seemingly insoluble access problems on the south loop, the one which crosses the Royal Ashdown Forest golf course on its way to and back from the Ashdown Forest, have been settled. They could have endangered the whole event – many thanks to Anthony Mitchell for sorting them out. Another problem was that of fitting all three loops into the 30 mile and 11 hour limits. Routes, when walked out, have a tendency to get longer rather than shorter so considerable change and re-routing has taken place – a case of ever-decreasing circles (well, ever-shrinking loops!). Many thanks to our two route finders, Manfred Engler and Dave Weatherley, and for all their hard work in this respect.

The Forest Row Village Hall, the hub of the whole operation, has been booked and additional car parking has been provided by the company *Fluid Architecture* on the Lewes Road. Now the rest of the logistics begin. A water point will be provided on each loop. Each will require tables, chairs, water containers (full) and biscuits. Progress will be recorded using the LDWA PACER system – Wi-Fi and mobile signals permitting. This will be backed up by the well-tried pen and paper system.

A major component of any successful challenge event is the provision of good food. In the case of the *Loops* food and drinks will be available in the village hall from about 1130 until the finish at 8pm. A lesson learned many years ago, on the first *Sussex Stride*, is to avoid cheap produce. It is always tempting to try and keep costs down but the food bill is not the place to do it - it shows a lack of respect for your customers and can cause havoc in the kitchen. I can still recall, on that first *Stride*, the sight of an oven full of uncooked sausages. Frying them had not been a success, such was their water content that they tended to explode. They then resisted all attempts to cook them and ended up in the bin rather than in the walkers.

Shopping, they say, is one of the most popular pastimes of the modern age – but not for me. The weekly shop has to be endured to prevent starvation. Shopping for large quantities of items has been made worse by the removal of the ‘number of items’ button on the till. The till cowboys now have to pass a single item back and forth across the reader while counting the quantity – “Was that 40 tins of beans sir?”. Please note – this is not a plea for someone else to take over the task – I feel so much better when it is all over!

As with any Challenge Event success is dependent upon having a sufficient number of marshals. The day will start at 07:30 and the walkers all depart at 09:00. The fastest competitors doing just one loop will start returning at about 11:30 and the slowest of those doing all 3 loops by 20:00. Food and drink are being provided for all those returning between those times, some more than once! If you are able to help for all or any part of the day or want more information about what’s involved, please contact me by email – chrisbainesholmes@gmail.com or by phone on 01273 772076 or 07977 810964. **Your help will be greatly appreciated.**

Chris Baines-Holmes, Challenge Events Organiser.

3. Group Walks

2017 Social Walks Programme as at July 31st

Date	Walk	Start	Miles	No.
04/02	February in Friston	Wilmington Priory	17	17
18/02	Walk & AGM	Milton Street	11	20
04/03	Circular from East Dean	East Dean	18	31
19/03	Bodle Street boogie	Heathfield	20	26
08/04	At the chalkface	Eastbourne	21	17
22/04	Two-level traipse	Westfield	19	8
06/05	SDM Highlights	East Dean	22	14
20/05	Cinque Ports 100 - Stages 3, 4 & 5	Rye	24	8
04/06	Jerome's usual appearance	West Chiltington	20	7
11/06	Joint walk with Kent Group	Rye	23	
18/06	From the top	Ditchling Beacon	20	cancelled
02/07	Round Frant in an eight	Frant	20	5
15/07	Forest Row to Forest Row via Forest Row	Forest Row	12/21	13/12
29/07	Burwash and beyond	Burwash	21	
12/08	Ditchling and The Downs - revisited	Devil's Dyke	20	
03/09	Lewes roundabout	Lewes	21	
17/09	Fox or Cat for lunch?	Horsted Keynes	20	
30/09	A few steps on the 1066 line	Battle	18	
08/10	Kent peaks - Tunbridge Wells	TBC	23	
21/10	Weir Wood wonder	Horsted Keynes	19	
05/11	Many views of Cuckmere	South Hill Barn	16	
19/11	Firle circular	Firle Beacon	17	
02/12	In the Jugg again	Telscombe	15	
17/12	Christmas walk and lunch	Alfriston	10	

(Check the [website](#) to confirm details of future walks)

Attention potential walk leaders!!



Our Walks Organiser will soon be thinking about the social walks programme for the period January to April 2018. He would love to recruit a few more Group members who are able to suggest new routes, mayhap to join his small and select band of walk leaders.

We have the full range of resources available to help plan and lead a social walk - maps (paper and digital) for the Sussex Group area, route planning software, plus regular leaders who are very willing to help with all aspects including walking out a new route. Please get in touch with our Walks Organiser via the link on the Committee page of the [website](#) if you would like to give it a try.

4. Miscellany

Wildflower meadows - going ... going ... almost gone ...

During the morning of the first day of the recent Sussex Group trip to the Yorkshire Dales the group traversed a wonderful meadow, basking in the sunshine and alive with insect life, close to the hamlet of Wharfe. In the afternoon of the third day the smaller group braving the inclement weather passed alongside another meadow alongside the Ribble a couple of miles south of Horton, its lush flora absorbing a steady downpour.



The traditional meadow is a thing of great beauty, especially in early June when its wide and diverse range of wildflowers are in bloom. Its flowers and grasses have intriguing names: great burnet, lady's mantle, common knapweed, eyebright, devil's-bit scabious, ox-eye daisy, rough hawkbit, water avens, meadowsweet, wood crane's-bill, cat's-ear, melancholy thistle, sneezewort, wood anemone, sweet vernal-grass, quaking grass and many others. The meadow is also a thing of great importance, in summer supporting a wide variety of insects and animals vital to pollination and to the food chain, in the winter months providing livestock with fodder free from chemical fertilisers and pesticides.

A quick glance at an OS *Explorer* map shows that meadows have a place in the country's social history, witness the many place names referring to their size or shape, to their owners or people associated with them, or to the wildlife found in them. Almost 2,000 roads and streets in Britain contain the word 'meadow' or 'dol', its Welsh equivalent.

Sadly the fields that were once a common and unremarkable feature of life have now all but vanished; the wildlife charity Plantlife has undertaken research that indicates the loss of 97% of flower meadows since the 1930s, mostly to changes in farming. The charity considers this one of the biggest tragedies in the history of nature conservation and recommends urgent action be taken to save the native flora and hence nurture the wildlife they support.

July 1st this year was designated National Meadows Day and was marked with more than 100 events across Britain in which people were able to learn to use a scythe, spot orchids or make a scarecrow. The events were part of a Save Our Magnificent Meadows project funded primarily by the Heritage Lottery Fund and intended to create or restore 15,000 acres of wildflower meadows. Fingers crossed the project will succeed.

1556 x Marilyn = 28 x Chomolungma



Jenny Hatfield from Cumbria became the first woman to complete all of Britain's 'Marilyns', hills with a drop of at least 150m on all sides, when she climbed Cruinn a'Bheinn earlier this year. She and her partner, Rick Salter, the ninth man to complete the list, celebrated with glasses of champagne at the summit. Ms Hatfield estimates she has climbed about 243,000m to achieve her goal, the equivalent of scaling Mt. Everest (Chomolungma) from sea level 28 times

The list of Marilyn's - a play on the Munro designation given to mountains in Scotland that are at least 3,000ft high - was created in 1992 by hillwalker Alan Dawson when he published *The Relative Hills of Britain*.

The stuff of legend

It is the 40th century of the Common Era. Archaeologists excavating a site at what was once a particularly deep and glutinous stretch of muddy terrain in an area traditionally known as 'The Weald' are puzzling over a few artefacts that include a scrap of laminated paper or card, faded orange in colour and bearing the faint inscription 'OS Explorer 136' in the crude written language system of the Later Dark Age, fragments of a strange device inscribed with the word 'Garmin' and two small corroded metallic cylinders marked 'AA'. They have been preserved in ground baked rock-hard by the northern climate of year-long hot, cloudless days that according to oral tradition followed the 'Trump declaration' that 'climate change is a myth'. One of the researchers postulates that the artefacts might provide the first solid evidence of the long-sought legendary navigational systems used by his distant ancestors - the 'map' and the 'GPS'. Tradition held that one dissolved in rain, whilst the other failed when most needed.

It might just happen ... recently something similar did

In 2013, during the excavation of a wreck from the Elizabethan era in the waters off Alderney, a cloudy crystal the size of a cigarette packet was discovered alongside a pair of dividers, the latter a standard nautical navigational aid. The crystal is of Icelandic spar, a calcite material that exhibits a property known as optical birefringence in which its refractive index depends on the polarization of the light travelling through it. Researchers have concluded that the object is likely to be a 16th century example of a legendary crystal cited in Norse mythology - a 'sunstone', used by Viking seafarers to locate the position of the sun on overcast days or when it was below the horizon.

"The King made them fetch the solar stone and held it up and saw where light radiated from the stone and thus directly verified Sigur's prediction" - an extract from one of the Icelandic sagas, in which a stone was said to be used to help navigate in snowy weather



A 16th optical compass?

Holding this kind of crystal to the eye along its axis and viewing the external scene produces two images, one from normal light and the other from light polarised as a result of scattering by mist or cloud. The Viking navigator would have looked through his 'sunstone' and scanned across the scene to determine the direction in which the images were of equal brightness - this would be the direction of the obscured or below-horizon sun. The accuracy of measurement is around 1degree, more than sufficient for the navigational needs of Scandinavian seamen and perhaps one of the reasons for their success at exploring northern waters.

It is not clear why the set of navigational instruments of a 16th century vessel should include a 10th century sun-seeking device. Reference to the use of a 'sunstone' by Elizabethan sailors has yet to be discovered but it is thought that the Alderney one might have been used to fine-tune or calibrate a magnetic compass to allow for deviations caused by the presence of large iron objects such as cannon.

"Livestock in field - beware!"

A Health and Safety Executive report indicates that 74 people were killed by cattle between 2000 and 2015, with 70% of deaths involving a bull or a newly-calved cow. It recommends that wherever possible farmers should avoid keeping cows and calves in fields with public footpaths.



Guestling church

This year has witnessed several incidents in which walkers have sustained serious injuries, the most recent of which involved a former Oxford don and businessman who died after being trampled to death by cows last month whilst walking alone in fields close to Guestling church in East Sussex.

The report concludes that the most frequent cause of problems is the presence of a dog, especially when calves are in the vicinity. There is a plethora of well-

intentioned (and often conflicting) tips advising a dog owner on the most appropriate course of action to take to deter aggressive cattle and so to avoid injury or worse. My favourite (untested) piece of advice is to purse one's lips and blow a high-pitched raspberry imitating the sound of a warble fly¹; it appears that cattle and horses are understandably terrified by the approach of this large fly, from whose eggs larvae hatch, penetrate the hide of the host animal and travel through connective tissue before emerging as adult flies.

Sussex Group members might care to remind themselves of the LDWA rules pertaining to dogs on walks:

- The decision to allow dogs on walks rests with the walk leader or walk organiser.
- If dogs are excluded from a walk solely because that is preference of the walk leader then Assistance dogs must be allowed, except where dogs are prohibited on permissive paths, in wildlife protection areas, or where there are over-riding health and safety issues.
- If the walk leader decides to accept dogs on a walk then he/she should check with the dog owners that each dog is covered by liability insurance. If the dog owner confirms verbally that this is so then the dog may be allowed on the walk. If there is no liability insurance then the dog will be excluded (for this purpose, verbal confirmation of having such liability insurance is treated as a binding agreement to this stipulation, thereby waiving any liability of the LDWA resulting from or related to any dog without such liability insurance).
- If dogs are not allowed this will be made clear in all published information, including *Strider*. We recommend 'No dogs allowed' where all dogs are excluded, and 'Assistance dogs only' where it is the walk leader's preference to exclude dogs.
- If there is no notification about dogs in *Strider* then members attending do so on the understanding that dogs are allowed on the walk.
- The walk leader can insist that the dog be on a lead for all, or certain, sections of the walk.

"The man at the B&B said it's only half an hour from here ..."

The scene:

Styhead, late in the afternoon of a grey April day, the temperature dropping, the rain beginning to fall and the light fading. A motley group approaches from Borrowdale, ages ranging from early teens to late-forties, many of them ill-clad in shorts and trainers. One of the older walkers approaches.

The conversation:

"Which way is it?"

"Which way is what?"

"The top"

"The top of what?"

"Scafell!"

The drama:

I enquire about map, compass, wet weather gear and head torches: no, none are being carried. I ask about their experience on high ground in bad weather: no, none. I try to explain the nature of the Corridor route and the considerable time it would take to traverse it, gain the summit of The Pike, and return: no, the 'leader' does not believe me, instead repeating the mantra *"the man at the B&B said it's only half an hour from here ... we're doing it for charity"*. I point out the Stretcher Box, explain why it was sited there, and urge an early return to their starting point in Borrowdale before the weather worsens and darkness falls. It is all to no avail. Fearing for their

¹ Those who are proficient with this type of raspberry are invited to demonstrate their skill during forthcoming Group walks, perhaps by using it to express their admiration of the leader's navigational ability ...

safety I politely decline to indicate the path leading to the Corridor route, turn my back to their obvious annoyance and begin my descent to Wasdale Head.



The Sty Head stretcher box, beyond it the terrain of the Corridor route

Charity walkers are often in their 20s and 30s, brimming with ambition and buoyed by good intentions to raise mountains of money for charity by scaling Britain's highest peaks. Frustratingly for the volunteers who rescue them when things go wrong, a growing number are armed with little more than mobile phones to navigate and record numbers are getting lost. The reported findings of Mountain Rescue Teams around the UK are consistent, for example:

Wasdale MRT

- There has been a doubling of callouts over the last ten years.
- The primary problem is that of people getting lost, usually because they don't know how to use a map and compass, or they haven't taken one. Some have thought there would be signposts or an obvious path, others have taken car sat-navs or have relied on Google Maps and a smart phone whose batteries have failed.
- The MRT was called out three times in 24 hours as 90mph winds from Storm Doris tore across the country during the last week of February. One incident involved four teenage girls becoming detached from a group of 36 walkers and becoming lost on Scafell Pike - the Team found them huddled behind a boulder suffering from mild hypothermia; it was their first time on a mountain.
- During 2016 35% of those rescued were lost, 28% injured or in need of medical attention, 16% overdue and 10% cragfast.

Llanberis MRT

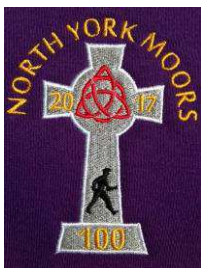
- During 2016 there were a record 216 calls involving incidents on Snowdon, around a third of them involving people being lost.
- A substantial number of people doing charity hikes are often poorly equipped and poorly prepared. Often they target a day a long time in advance and so do not take cognisance of the weather forecast, or they ignore it.
- Dependence on smart phones to solve a problem is often the root cause of the problem.

Scottish Mountain Rescue (representing 23 of the country's 27 MRTs)

- Individual MRTs are seeing more use of mapping apps on phones: *"They're very good aids, but no substitute for map and compass and, more importantly, knowing how to use them."*

Jon Bennett, who works for the Lake District National Park as a felltop assessor, is one of two people who climb Helvellyn every day from December to Easter to gauge conditions at the top. His advice to those who lack experience is quite straightforward: *"If in doubt, turn back. The mountains will be here another day, it's more important not to put yourself or others at risk."*

Congratulations!



... to Steve on his successful completion of the LDWA North Yorks Moors 100 in May this year.

A day walk from Alfriston: two options

Option 1 - A local company's 'walk and wine event' (See <http://www.fizzonfoot.com>) that:

- Takes the customer from Alfriston to the top of The Downs, providing views "*to reward your uphill start*".
- Wends downwards to Charleston Farmhouse where refreshments await.
- Includes lunch and a vineyard tour.
- Makes available a minibus return if required.
- Provides the opportunity to purchase a local hamper from the company (at an additional cost of £45 upwards).

Option 2 - A local walking group's 'social walk' (see <http://www.ldwasussex.org.uk>) that:

- Follows a figure of eight from Alfriston, beginning eastwards and clockwise to Jevington, East Dean and the Seven Sisters, throughout with magnificent views seen through the mists of pain.
- Revisits Alfriston where refreshments await (*The Smugglers* or a picnic in the drizzle).
- Concludes with a westward and clockwise loop to Firle, returning via Charleston Farmhouse and the deep, cloying mud of the Old Coach Road.
- Includes free short breaks ("*OK, 5-minute drinks stop ... ladies' loo in the bushes to the right*").
- Allows for a return from Firle by public transport if preferred (No. 124 bus departing at 07:57 the next day/change to the No. 28 at Ringmer/change to the No. 12X at Brighton/change to the No. 126 at Seaford), arriving Alfriston at 10:48 on Day 2.
- Provides the opportunity to purchase a world-class Cornish pasty from the Alfriston village store (at an additional cost of £2.36)

Cost-effectiveness

Option 1: ca. 3 miles at an average of a dawdle. Cost (excl. hamper) £115 (i.e. £38.33 per mile)

Option 2: ca. 26 miles at an average of 3.2mph. Cost (excl. pasty) £10.08² (i.e. 38.9p per mile)

Now which would you choose? It's a no-brainer, isn't it? ***Well isn't it??***

² Assuming the purchase of (a) an LDWA Individual membership and an average of 1 walk per month, and (b) baguette and chips and a pint of Harveys at *The Smugglers*.

5. 'Your Walk'

Lejog 2017

David Hodge, our Webmaster, has been walking the 'End to End' (Land's End to John O' Groats) in 'easy' stages. He is close to completing the challenge ...

David has progressed as far as the royal burgh of Tain in the county of Ross, north of Inverness, and plans to walk the final 137-mile section from there to John O'Groats in June next year. This used to be the most dangerous section of the entire route because it involved road walking along the very busy A99, but the situation has improved considerably with the recent creation of the John O' Groats Trail, a coastal walking route that traverses shorelines, cliff tops, back lanes and footpaths. <http://www.jogt.org.uk>



Whilst walking the West Highland Way section last year illness caused David to miss the transit of Rannoch Moor and he plans to return to complete the stage in September this year.

Settle Sojourn

When an email arrived from Sussex LDWA asking for expressions of interest in a late June walking break in The Yorkshire Dales I jumped at the opportunity to participate. The Dales have long been one of my favourite haunts and hold many golden memories for me. A party of eleven from diverse parts of the country confirmed their interest. We were to be based in Settle, a characterful bustling historic market town at the gateway to Upper Ribblesdale and home to the famous Settle - Carlisle Railway. The town also provided us with an excellent base for first rate fell walking in a special landscape of immense beauty and character.

The week got off to a flying start with a perfect blue sky mid-summer day. We eagerly set off from Settle in brilliant sunshine, following the picture postcard pretty River Ribble along a path shaded by ancient broadleaved trees to Stainforth where we stopped to admire the splendour of Stainforth Force, looked for otters, tried to spot kingfishers, and took advantage of a perfect photo opportunity.



Stainforth Force



Smearsett Scar - the approach to Feizor

Our route then took us inland through a stunning landscape of drystone walls, and a patchwork of flower-rich hay meadows golden with buttercups, and dotted with purple orchids. *Elaine's Tea Room* at Feizor provided not only a welcome refreshment stop but also an entertaining *Emmerdale Farm* moment for customers. Just as we relaxed on the patio with pots of coffee, tea, plates of scones, and giant

slabs of carrot cake, a renegade flock of escaped sheep raced past fanning out in different directions further down the lane. In hot pursuit were Elaine's catering team with aprons a-flapping, a couple of farm hands and a collie. The rebellious sheep, with some difficulty, were brought to heel, calm was restored, and the excitement over we continued our hike to Ingleborough, the second highest peak in The Dales at 2,372 feet.

Above the dales the landscape changed to bare bright green hillsides dotted with grey 'erratics', boulders of gritstone transported from adjoining areas by glacial action and left behind on the limestone terrain around 12,000 years ago when at the end of the last Ice Age the ice sheets receded, and gave us our first sightings of limestone pavements. These magnificent plateaus of bare limestone have been weathered into a mosaic of deep fissures and are criss-crossed with 'clints' (blocks) and 'grykes' (crevices), which are actually very hazardous to walk on. A steady climb across the flank of Simon Fell followed by a short scramble onto the top of Ingleborough brought us to the site of one of the highest Iron Age hillforts in England, thought to have been a stronghold of the Brigantes tribe, and rewarded us with spectacular views of the mountains of The Lakes and of Morecambe Bay, its waters glinting in the sunshine. Closer by was Whernside, whilst northwards and far below our feet the iconic Ribblehead viaduct beckoned in the middle distance.

We descended to Ribblehead, keen to see at close quarters the viaduct that is a special point of interest on the celebrated Settle-to-Carlisle Railway, and to quench our thirst at *The Station Inn*, a splendid walkers' watering hole and overnight stop. Here the larger than life (in every respect) landlord dispensed humour, information and ale in equal measure; pints of *Semer Water* beer were pulled for those who could correctly pronounce the name³, whilst the landlord and Trevor engaged in an informative 'head brewers we have known' conversation.

My research tells me that the viaduct runs a quarter of a mile across the valley of the River Ribble, that it has twenty four arches and at its highest point stands 106 feet above the surrounding countryside. British Rail spent years trying to close it, but thankfully intelligence and modern marketing saved the line and one of the classic sights of Yorkshire.



Ribblehead viaduct from Simon Fell

Leaving behind a group of four who were reluctant to tear themselves away from the array of Real Ales and the temptations of the humungous steak and kidney puddings, the majority caught the early train back from Ribblehead Station to Settle, speeding along one of Britain's best known rail lines through lovely countryside. All agreed it had been a marvellous day.

A much greyer day followed, the possibility of heavy rain was forecast and it was decided to opt for a shorter trek of some fourteen miles. The rain actually held off for most of the time, and we enjoyed a route that took us to Gargrave by bus, along the valley of the River Aire following a section of the Pennine Way, thence through archetypal limestone scenery taking in the quintessential sites of Janet's Foss, Gordale Scar, Malham Cove and Attermire Scar.

³Editor's Note - "*Semma Watta*"



Lunch time

Janet's Foss is a small but delightful waterfall set in a shady dell and reputedly home of Jennet Queen of the Fairies; as you can imagine that all caused a few wry comments from the chaps! A few yards further and Gordale Bridge yielded the welcome sight of a mobile foodstall from which an enterprising local lady dispenses hearty sandwiches and mugs of steaming nectar at prices far removed from those at watering holes in the south east. We sat and watched a pair of yellow wagtails brave the group of onlookers, in turn carefully edging across the face of the stone bridge to feed their hungry brood.

The dramatic gorge of Gordale Scar was held in great awe by the Nineteenth Century British Romantic Poets, Artists and Travellers who all waxed lyrical at this monument of nature. We were certainly wowed by the place, a huge limestone gorge formed at the northerly end of the Craven Fault when a cavern collapsed.

Malham Cove is a huge curving amphitheatre-shaped cliff formation, formed by a waterfall carrying meltwater from glaciers at the end of the last Ice Age. At the top of the cliff is a deeply eroded limestone pavement which gives brilliant views down the dale to Malham and beyond. We came across a group of people comforting someone who had fallen and been injured and was waiting to be airlifted to hospital; a timely reminder of the hazards of walking across limestone pavements.

Leaving the Cove behind us, we turned north along Watlowes, formerly the bed of the river that long ago vanished underground via a sink hole some way upstream at a spot unimaginatively named Water Sinks. At the head of the dry valley we climbed to Robin Hill Rigg and thence to Attermire Scar via the old Stockdale Road track. Attermire Scar is a steep faced high limestone cliff with many rocky outcrops and caves, inside some of which have been found artefacts from prehistoric times. From here we dropped down back into Settle. Another brilliant day!



Malham Cove

Heavy rain blew in the next day shortly after we left the station at Horton in Ribblesdale. We made the 371 yards from the station to the coffee shop where we enjoyed several cafetières of excellent coffee whilst revising our schedule for the day. We had planned to ascend the third highest peak in The Dales, Pen-y-ghent but, after battling with the elements for an hour and noting that the mountain was shrouded in low cloud, we abandoned the climb at Hull Pot, the largest natural hole in England, which provided us with our wow factor for the day. By now it was raining the proverbial cats and dogs, and we decided to squelch our way back down to Horton and thence to Settle following an attractive riverside path. At Stainforth we briefly endured cold, rude and unwelcoming treatment from the landlord at the self-proclaimed '*perfect place to stop after walking in the countryside*'. Hmmm.

Overnight the Wet Weather Front moved South to Manchester, leaving us with overcast skies but no rain for our final group walk of the week. We headed towards The West Dales by rail to

Kirkby Stephen for a walk along the ridge on the eastern side of the Mallerstang valley. The landscape here was desolately awesome with hills covered in tough brown sedges and fluffy white cottongrass. The sedge tussocks and boggy land of the slopes made the climb up to the fell ridge at High Pike very hard work. But once on the top our efforts were well compensated for by the fabulous views, the eerily haunting burbling call of curlews, the sightings of barn owls and a leveret and the gradually brightening sky.



Mallerstang Scar, the Eden valley & the hills of Great Asby Scar

At length we descended to Garsdale Head, a lonely pass miles from anywhere, and headed for *The Moorcock Inn* (dubbed *The Nymphomaniac's Plea* by Bill Bryson) for scones, tea and, for some, pint glasses of foaming amber nectar. The sun came out whilst we were waiting at the station for the train back to Settle and we were all amazed to see a red squirrel scampering along the station boundary fence.

And so our Dales Diversion came to an end. All agreed it had been a stellar week, far removed from post Electoral concerns and the whirligig of modern life. A HUGE thank you to David for organising such a fabulous week and for all his hard work in planning and leading the walks. As always these events are as much about the people involved as they are about the activities. So a second great big thank you goes to Bruce, Sue, Tony, Trevor, Chris, Geoff, Martin, Patrick and Jude for their easy going cheerful company.

My only regrets: the week went too quickly; we missed National Meadow Day and the opportunities to learn how to use a scythe and build scarecrows; and that we were not in town to go potty in The Dales at the Settle Flowerpot Festival.

Dianne Marsden

6. Peak Potter 2018

The Dales Diversion group returned still on speaking terms so we have decided to travel to foreign parts once again next year. We are planning a trip to Derbyshire, where there is a variety of terrain ranging from peat and gritstone (the Dark Peak) to limestone (the White Peak), with lush valleys between. If you think you might like to join us please register your interest via the link on the Home Page of the [website](#) and you will be provided with more details in due course.



Peak District scenery: limestone, millstone grit and the Peveril of the Peak village of Castleton



SDM 2017



A big "Thank You" goes to those who have provided material for this edition