

Long Distance Walkers' Association

SUSSEX GROUP

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



Old, twisted and creaky (the house, that is). Prinkham, an early 17th century building passed during the 'Quick Kentish Canter' group walk on a cool (and very muddy!) April day.

A portent of hot days to come. A drinks break taken on the banks of the Rother (the W Sussex river of that name) at Stedham Mill during the 'West Sussex Revival' group walk on a glorious day in mid May.



NEWSLETTER July 2018

1. Sussex Group Committee, July 2018

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:	Jane Bates
Co-opted member:	Chris Kennedy

David Nash resigned from the committee at the AGM earlier this year and we thank him for his contributions. At that meeting Jane Bates' offer of her services was accepted unanimously. More recently Chris Kennedy has been co-opted onto the committee to assist with running the Group.

2. Challenge Events

Recent Events

LDWA South Downs Marathon, 13th May 2018.

The Numbers. 143 entered, 119 started - a no-show rate of 17%. 110 finished.

This is a 20% reduction in entries from last year. A possible reason for this was the proximity of the LDWA 100 event two weeks later – the Cinque Ports 100, from Hasting to Dover. Perhaps some of the local 100 entrants didn't fancy 28 miles and 4000+ feet of ascent so close to the 100.

The Weather. To begin with the weather was overcast, not cold, and a little breezy. Later, it became a perfect spring day – sunny and warm and still breezy. Despite the unusual winter, the conditions underfoot were dry.

The Route. Two variations this year:

- The view from the Comp track along Cradle Hill is now obscured by the growth of shrubs to the north. The fields on the other side of the valley, once an unending panorama of cereals (malting barley it was rumoured) are now occupied by the Rathfinny Vineyard. As part of 'The Rathfinny Experience' the footpath beneath Cradle Hill has been improved and is busier. After crossing the Alfriston Road the route descends to the valley floor, with views of the vineyard on the right. After passing two boreholes (water not wine one presumes) the path returns to the original route via a short but steep hill.
- The route from Jevington now follows the Wealdway and 1066 Country Walk over Combe Hill with extensive views of Eastbourne.

TrackLogs indicates the changes have added about 1000 yards to the route, now at 27.7 miles.

Conclusion. The drop in the number of entrants is of concern. The route, despite being fairly tough (4000+ feet of up), 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 2018 Feedback

Anon:- Thanks and congratulations on another great event - we liked the 2 route changes, nice past the vineyards and lovely grassy tracks and views over Eastbourne.

Andy:- Thanks to everybody involved in the Sussex group's South Downs Marathon yesterday. It was a splendid walk with marvellous scenery, accurate route description and wonderful weather. As always, all of the start/finish and checkpoint volunteers were brilliant.

Helen:- I would like to say thank you for a well organised event despite us not finishing in your allotted time.

Judi:- Great route, perfect weather, a really enjoyable day. Pub serves Curious Brew, what could be more perfect after a day on the Downs? Thanks to everyone involved.

Elizabeth:- My first LDWA event and definitely not my last! What a lovely event and so well organised. Food and tea especially appreciated! I was surprised by how much I enjoyed the navigation with the excellent instructions.

Brian:- Superb event yet again. I also appreciated the two route changes. Thanks to all the team for their efforts and time given.

Zoltan:- There is something special about the relaxed morning at East Dean Village Hall. Tea served in china cups with biscuits and a smile. Nothing is missing, everyone is helpful and ready. Fantastic day out on the gorgeous South Downs again. Perfect weather (always!). 2 great changes to the course that make it an even bigger classic. It's faultless. Thank you. Please keep doing it!

Angie:- I just wanted to thank you all for another wonderful event on Sunday. It was the third time I have participated in this event & each time I have been impressed and delighted by the organisational efficiency, the lovely marshals, the friendliness of the event, and of course the most wonderful challenging route. I have a few sore muscles as souvenirs but a great many lovely memories and photos too! Please share my thanks with everyone who contributed to making this day such a huge success.



'Customer care' at East Dean

Forthcoming Events

Coming soon ...

LDWA Sussex Loops, 9th September 2018

This is the second outing of our latest Challenge Event, exploring North Sussex. The route is comprised of three loops, all starting and finishing at the Village Hall in Forest Row:

The South Loop – the Ashdown Forest – c12 miles.

The North Loop – the Cansiron Loop – c10 miles.

The West Loop – the Rural Loop – c9 miles.

ALL participants will undertake the South Loop. Upon completion within the time limit, participants may wish to undertake EITHER the North Loop OR the North Loop followed by the West Loop. The choice of loops must be made at the time the event is booked. Runners are welcome. A clip point, serving biscuits and water, will be present about halfway round each loop. Light food and drinks will be served at the village hall from 10:30, available every time you return!

Whether you fancy a less strenuous day out or wish to undertake the full 31 miles, this event will give you the chance to experience this less well-explored corner of Sussex. For full details please see the Events section of the LDWA Sussex [website](#).

Marshals are always needed for a successful event. 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 via 01273 772076 or 07977 810964 or chrisbainesholmes@gmail.com. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

Chris Baines-Holmes, Challenge Events Organiser

3. Group Walks - 2018 programme as at July 25th

Date	Walk	Start	Miles	No.
07/01	First of the year	Firle	12	37
27/01	Harbour and heights	Seaford	18	16
10/02	Jerome's Crawley appearance	Crawley	19	12
24/02	Waldron walkabout	Waldron	17	16
03/03	AGM	Sussex Ox	Cancelled (snow)	
10/03	Joan's Jolly	East Dean	17	6
14/04	At the chalkface	Eastbourne	21	16
29/04	A quick Kentish canter	Forest Row	20	14
05/05	South Downs Marathon highlights	East Dean	21	18
19/05	West Sussex revival	Midhurst	20	12
02/06	Literature and links	Horsham	20	16
16/06	Weald, south, east and west	Wilmington Priory	20	14
01/07	Spa valley saunter	Groombridge	21	8
14/07	Probing the eastern frontier	Westfield	19	8
28/07	Circular from Lewes	Lewes	19	
11/08	Mayfield circular	Mayfield	20	
25/08	Common Fish	Ditchling Common	20	
15/09	High Weald wander	Wadhurst	20	
29/09	TBA	TBA	TBA	
13/10	Hogtrough, Bodle and Crouch	Catsfield	19	
10/11	River, Downs, cliffs	Newhaven Bridge	18	
24/11	TBA	TBA	TBA	
08/12	Crowborough circular	Crowborough	15	
15/12	Christmas walk and lunch	TBA	TBA	

Late changes are sometimes necessary. Please check the [website](#) to confirm details

4. Compliance

Those who have scanned the list of committee members might be wondering why we have a Compliance Officer and what his or her role might be. Well, it covers two main areas, namely Data Protection, and Risk Assessment.

We have heard a lot about GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) this year, and they seem to be causing more work for small organisations like the LDWA than for the big companies they were meant to be aimed at. In summary, the Sussex Group follows the LDWA National Data Protection Guidelines – please see the [data protection link](#) on the national LDWA website for details. We discuss data protection issues at our committee meetings, and I review items such as Event Entry forms to ensure that we comply.

Regarding risk assessments, we follow national LDWA guidelines for organisation of challenge walks, and I am developing a 'generic' risk assessment template which can be adapted to each of our events, each of which is organised by very experienced members of Sussex Group. We have never had any serious incidents, but any lessons learned are used to improve the event the next time we run it. One key thing we do is to produce a 'Hazards by Leg' table, in parallel with the Route Description. This lists, for example, all locations where the route crosses or follows a road, as this is one of the major risks we have identified. For each location, we consider the traffic (speed and volume), and the sightlines, so that we can give clear instructions in the RD (or in some cases, we decide to amend the route to avoid the hazard). This takes time to do, and we are especially grateful to Chris Baines-Holmes for doing it so thoroughly for the last few events.

The Group is also committed to a policy of equality and diversity and members of the committee are beacons of the EGIABGWM (Elderly, Grumpy, Incontinent, Argumentative But Generally Well Meaning) community.

Chris Coates, Compliance Officer

5. Miscellany

Congratulations ...



... to those Sussex Group members who successfully completed the Cinque Ports 100 in May:

Jane Bates and Jane Macefield (*via the Marshals' Walk*)
Sammy Dawkins, Manfred Engler and Chris Kennedy (*via the main event*)

Glyndebourne

A group of us are going to Glyndebourne again on Monday 22nd October to see the autumn tour production of Massenet's Cendrillon (a French version of Cinderella), as none of us has seen it. It starts at 4.00pm, which is earlier than usual, but it does mean we will be able to see the gardens in daylight! I have booked some seats in the Upper Circle, for people who responded to the

notice on the Group website, as group bookings opened in May. If anyone else wants to join us, you can book direct with Glyndebourne box office (these seats are £39). Dress code: smart casual, suits, frocks, whatever, but sorry, no hairy legs or boots.

Chris Coates, Cultural Correspondent

Litter Picking on the South Downs Way

In a recent edition of the BBC programme 'Countryfile' one of the national trails in the north of the country was highlighted due to an initiative to keep the path clear of litter. Various youth groups, schools, scout troops etc. had been designated a small stretch of the path to keep clear of litter. The various groups involved appeared to take a keen interest in looking after their particular stretch of the path. It was not only an opportunity to encourage youngsters not to litter, but also gave them the opportunities to be out and about experiencing the joys of the countryside.

Chris Baines-Holmes and I visited the National Park Centre for the South Downs last month and discussed the possibility of replicating the situation on the South Downs. The idea would be to encourage the various groups to 'own' their section of the South Downs Way and ensure that it was kept clear of litter. The idea was met with a very positive response. In order to 'get the ball rolling', Chris and I have volunteered the Sussex Group of the LDWA to look after the section, in fact the two sections, between Alfriston and Eastbourne. The idea would be to gradually hand this over to schools etc. once the interest has been generated.

We plan to do the initial 'litter pick' in October of this year over a weekend yet to be decided. We would need as many members (and friends) of the Group as possible to participate. We will be provided with special bags which will be left, once filled with rubbish, at designated spots to be collected probably by the Council. The exercise will be good publicity for the Group so we hope that it is well supported. There would be a subsequent 'litter pick' probably in March or April of next year. It is felt that twice a year should be sufficient to keep the path relatively free of litter.

Anthony Mitchell



The Stick Man - an alternative approach? If necessary please contact the editor for a translation ...



Archaeology and the Sussex Loops

Walkers on the Sussex Loops may wonder whether the event name is significant (apart from the three-lobed design of the route), and what the (new this year) event badge signifies - well they were inspired by the Bronze Age bracelets known as 'Sussex Loops'. Only about 30 of these have been found, and all in the South Downs and Weald areas of Sussex. They are normally found in pairs or threes. They were made in bronze, about 3,500 years ago, and were probably worn by high status individuals. The photo on the left is of an original bracelet, that on the right is of two modern reproductions.



I went on a trip to St Albans with the Brighton & Hove Archaeological Society (who can be seen on Wednesdays and Saturdays digging up Romano-British remains at Rocky Clump in Stanmer Park). We met a lady who, apart from looking like Boudicca, with flowing red hair, is the Membership Secretary of the Prehistoric Society, and used to run the excavations at Beddingham Roman villa near Lewes. She has had a silver Loop made up by a metal-working friend, and wears it all the time. It is heavy, and would cost a few hundred pounds, due to the labour content, as well as cost of silver (the other one is a cheaper iron version). The Loops look really good, and would have been really impressive when metal was a rare and valuable commodity.

Chris Coates, Archaeological Correspondent

Notes from a ~~train spotter's~~ sign-spotter's diary

One of the walks during the Sussex Group's 'Peak Potter' trip to Derbyshire in June began with a steady climb along the line of the road that the Romans built to link their fort at Navio, established to dominate the local Brigantes tribe and to protect the lead-mining interests of the Empire, with that to the north at Melandra, close by the modern town of Glossop. At Hope Cross, an ancient stone pillar marking the meeting of packhorse trails, the day's route left the Roman way and descended to the River Ashop before climbing to the high ground west of the Upper Derwent valley (scene of the Dambusters' practice runs in 1943) and continuing north-westwards to Alport Castles. Some time later, during the descent towards the tiny hamlet of Alport on departing the Castles (the name given to a dramatic gritstone feature thought to be the longest landslip in the UK), a footpath sign at a path junction provided reassurance that up to that point the navigation had been accurate. It wasn't just any old



'PD&NCFPS No. 107'

footpath sign though, rather an impressively large and bold cast iron plate, 'No. 107', erected in 1948 by the 'Peak District & Northern Counties Footpaths Preservation Society'.

This, the oldest surviving regional footpath society in the UK, was formed officially at a meeting held in Manchester in August 1894 but its roots go back further to the 'Manchester Association for the Preservation of Ancient Public Footpaths' of 1826. The Society has been active for well over 100 years, promoting the interests of public footpath users in the north Midlands and northwest of England. Volunteer members monitor, protect, and improve the footpath network for the benefit of all and the Society's signs are probably its most enduring items. Erection of the metal 'notices', as they were initially called, began in 1905 and they now number 388, of which 20 have survived from before WWI - a lasting tribute to the durability of cast iron (and also perhaps to the decision to deploy signs too heavy to be pilfered!).

Wells and Wakes

Enjoyment of Peak District walks in the summer is heightened by the opportunity to visit examples of the 'Well Dressing' tradition in which teams of local people create vibrant and elaborate pictorial scenes, often depicting biblical events, that are then displayed at wells and springs in or near rural communities.



The Over Haddon well dressing, sited adjacent to the village pump

The origins of the tradition lie in the pagan custom of making tribute to local gods whom our Celtic ('Briton') forebears associated with sources of water, believing that making the offerings would ensure a continued supply of the life-giving liquid. The Romans adopted some of multitude of deities, on occasion as a means by which they could help maintain their rule over a particularly troublesome tribe - for example the goddess Sulis who was worshipped at the thermal spring that the Romans named Aqua Sulis and around which developed the city that we know as Bath. Later the pagan practices were gradually and formally replaced by Christian ones but vestiges of the old tradition endured in parts of rural England and in the High Peak they appear to have taken on a special significance in the 17th century when communities sought any way they could in an attempt to avoid being struck down by the Plague. The common belief was that this deadly pestilence was contracted from drinking water and in some areas superstitious (and desperate) folk would place garlands

and tributes at their local well or spring as an act of propitiation or, in cases where the community had not been visited by 'the Black Death', as an expression of thanks for deliverance.

The Derbyshire tradition is unique to the area because of the time-consuming and exacting method used to create the intricate and ephemeral pictorial scenes: individual flower petals, leaves, seeds etc. are pressed by hand onto boards covered with wet clay. The Well Dressing season now extends throughout the summer period, is no longer confined to its traditional homeland of the High Peak and is a valuable stimulus to the local tourist industry.

Some of the villages visited during the week in Derbyshire combined Well Dressing activities with a variety of others that marked their 'Wakes Week'. Streets, shop fronts and houses were festooned with bunting, local societies had opened their doors to visitors and were exhibiting examples of their activities, whilst biblical tableaux in one village church were enhanced (or so we were informed) by the presence of hundreds of small paper angels, each one firmly affixed to a pew, statue or some other hard surface by means of a small blob of Blu Tac.

Wakes Week was originally a Christian religious festival and continued as such until the Industrial Revolution at which time it developed into a secular holiday, particularly in northwest England. From the mid 19th until the mid 20th century most local industries in that area would come to a halt for a week during which the majority of their workers together with their families would depart for their Wakes Week holiday by



*Wakes Week scenes:
2018 High Peak*



charabanc or train, typically en route to Blackpool, Southport or north Wales. The observance of this community holiday has all but disappeared in recent times due to the decline of the local manufacturing industries and the standardisation of school holidays.



Wakes Week scenes: 1930s Lancashire

It seems, though, that in some High Peak villages the wheel has come full circle and a Wakes Week once again coincides with religious celebration, albeit the latter now based not on Christian beliefs but on echoes of the pagan worship of local water spirits or deities.

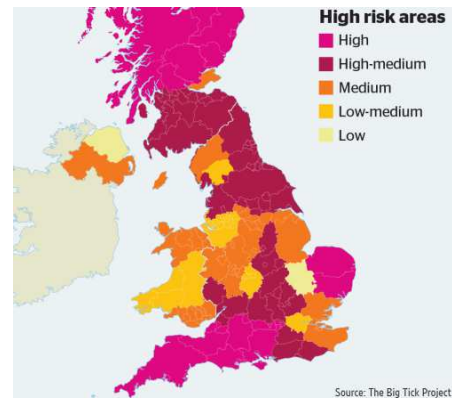
Walking in shorts could damage your health!

Lyme disease

No apology is offered for the inclusion of this, the third successive summer newsletter article warning of Lyme disease, because the condition is becoming worryingly common throughout the UK. Health experts fear that our changing climate, with its mild winters and warm, wet springs and summers, is increasing the proliferation of infected ticks that can transmit the *borrelia burgdorferi* bacterium to a human by means of a bite, and is extending the annual period during which ticks are active.

The first indication of a problem is often a bull's-eye shaped rash around the bite and in the early stages of infection victims may suffer flu-like symptoms such as tiredness, muscle and joint pains, headaches, and fever. Most cases of Lyme disease can be cured by prompt treatment with antibiotics, but if left untreated serious symptoms may appear weeks, months or even years later. These can include inflammatory arthritis, facial paralysis, memory problems, meningitis and even terminal heart failure.

Interpreting the statistics derived from analyses of infected blood samples is very difficult and so estimates for the likely annual number of cases of infection during 2016 range widely, from around 3,000 to something in excess of 45,000. What is not in doubt is that infected ticks (estimated to be around 20% of the total population) are spreading throughout the UK. **Our part of the southeast is rated as an area of high to medium risk.**



Lyme disease - UK risk areas

When at this time of year venturing into areas where brushing against vegetation is likely, the first line of defence is to wear a long-sleeved top together with long trousers, ideally with the bottoms of the latter secured. **Bare legs and arms invite trouble.** Ideally a proprietary tick-removing tool should be carried for use if necessary en route, and on return from a summer walk in the countryside one should **check thoroughly for ticks and carefully remove any that are found, in each case making sure that the head is not left embedded in one's skin.** More information about Lyme disease may be found on the [NHS website](#).

Horseflies



The troublesome cleg

The recent heatwave has resulted in the flourishing of the horsefly (aka cleg) and its increased activity around livestock, from which the females seek blood to obtain the protein needed to develop eggs. Because livestock have a limited ability to swat it away, the insect has evolved without the need to inject an anaesthetic before its mouthparts chisel into its victim's flesh; hence a horsefly bite is noticeably more painful than those from ticks and other such pests. The bite is quite likely to get infected and treatment often requires a course of antibiotics; in the worst cases cellulitis (a bacterial infection of the skin and underlying tissue) develops. According to Public

Health England data, on 8 July this year nearly 9,000 people called the NHS 111 helpline (around double the historical baseline figure) to seek help after being bitten. **Official advice to those venturing into the countryside is to wear clothing to cover one's limbs** and, if receiving a horsefly bite, to take paracetamol and apply calamine lotion to the affected area to reduce itching. Medical attention should be sought if the skin begins to redden and if a fever develops.

Camouflage

Recent scientific studies suggest that the zebra has evolved with black and white striped hide because for some reason the pattern reduces the animal's attractiveness to horseflies and tsetse flies. So perhaps when preparing for a summer walk in the Weald one should consider donning head-to-toe black and white striped clothing, with trouser bottoms tucked into socks. Think criminal (the backpack could be labelled 'Swag') ... or Newcastle United Home strip ... and think how easy it should be to find a table in a crowded 'dining pub' on a Sunday lunchtime ...

Checkpoint

The sun beat down, hot and unforgiving. Occasionally a vehicle swished along the dusty tarmac behind the hedge, under the sea wall. The food trays were full and every jug was brimming, some with squash and others with plain water, all vying for what shade there was under the 30 foot gazebo. And still we waited. Then, thru the heat shimmer, came the first – a single walker, tall and sweaty. He swept through the bucket drop, ate something, drank something, thanked us and departed eastwards. Very soon others came, first a trickle, then a rush, then a torrent, strung out along the side of the canal. Would the food hold out? Would the squash makers get

overwhelmed by the insatiable demand? Would it all end in tears? For this was the first day of the Cinque Ports 100 and we were Checkpoint 1 (CP1), **the feeding station from hell!**

The 2018 100 mile event, held over the late Spring Bank holiday, the Cinque Ports 100, was organised by our near neighbours the Kent Group and we were invited to organise CP1 at Pett Level, some 7 miles from the start in Hastings. The checkpoint was to be open from 11:20 to 14:10. The entry limit on 100 events is 500, ca. 450 being walkers, the rest runners. At 7 miles from the start this means that some 400+ entrants can pass through CP1 in 90 minutes or less. The distribution is not even and unpredictable peaks can occur. Therefore, CP1 requires a lot of marshals, a site with plenty of room and ready-prepared food. Even if all these conditions are met CP1 is often a nightmare.

The location of the checkpoint, beside the coast road east of Pett Level, originally featured a very useful asset – the Smugglers pub. Some 200 yards back down the road the Smugglers would provide the marshals with sustenance and, of equal importance, with the 500 litres of water needed to sustain the entrants. Sadly, the Smugglers closed several months before the event. For a suitable donation the water was provided by the Pett Level Independent Rescue Boat Association from their boathouse beside the pub.

CP1, with its staff of 13 marshals, somehow withstood the pressure. At one point the squash production line nearly cracked but was soon recovered. The symmetry of the food trays was soon lost as some items rapidly disappeared while others were, like Theresa May's Brexit plans, ignored. One marshal roamed among the walkers, replenishing bottles and hydration systems from two jugs held before him like a pair of six-shooters, while another drove to and from the boathouse, maintaining the water supply. Soon the rush was over. Sometime later the 30 or so runners trickled through, after which we all packed up and went home.

The first checkpoint on any 100 event is fraught. Was our CP1 a success? We have not yet heard the opinion of our customers, perhaps we never will. From the Sussex point of view it seemed to go pretty well, despite the absence of a pub. My thanks to all who helped before and on the day.

Chris Baines-Holmes

John Volanthen

Those of you who have been following the dramatic rescue of the youngsters and their football coach in Thailand will have heard that one of the two people who not only found the group but who also played a major part in their rescue was John Volanthen, one of the world's leading cave divers.

John is the elder son of Jill and Peter Volanthen, loyal members of the Sussex Group for about fifteen years during the latter years of the last century and the early years of this, who enjoyed their walking, participating in many social walks and assisting at checkpoints on events. They led many of the January London walks and were an integral part of the Easter weekend away trips. Jill taught us how to play a card game called 'Bonk' which was a great favourite of those attending the trips. Yes there was plenty of walking and 'bonking'! Sadly Peter, who was always very proud of John's activities, died last September.



John Volanthen (Left) & Richard Stanton in Thailand

Anthony Mitchell

6. 'Your Walk'

LeJog 2018

David Hodge, our Group Webmaster, is nearing the end of his incremental LeJog (Land's End to John o' Groats) walk

Back up to Scotland to finish some bits I had missed - in the hottest June weather I have ever walked in. Train to Glasgow and then Tyndrum; here I spent 2 days walking Tyndrum to Bridge of Orchy, followed by Bridge of Orchy to Kingshouse.

The Bridge of Orchy section is fairly flat and only 6 miles so it was an easy starter for the trip. A beer with other walkers and then a bus back to my Tyndrum hotel. The Rannoch Moor section on the following day is also fairly flat, apart from a climb over a hill just outside Bridge of Orchy (you can cheat and take the flat minor road!). I also stopped at Ba Bridge for a rest (see Joan Wortley's account (below) of her West Highland Way (WHW) adventure). This section is about 12 miles. When I was here 2 years ago I stayed at the Kingshouse Hotel, but this is being rebuilt, so walkers have to find other options. I however took the bus back to Tyndrum.

So having completed my two missed WHW sections I was on to Tain, via Fort William, Inverness by three buses, to complete some sections on the new John o' Groats Trail. At Tain I used a bus to get to Golspie and then walked to Brora passing Dunrobin Castle sitting on the hillside, about 7 miles. Brora has a nice little harbour and is a well kept and inviting place. I got back to Tain by train. On the next day I was due to do 14 miles from Dornoch to Golspie but it was even hotter than the day before, so I did 9 miles from Tain to Dornoch, again fairly easy walking.

Friday was my last day so as there was no short walk to do I went to Inverness by bus and took another one to Muir of Ord. There was then a 20 minute walk to the Glen Ord distillery. An interesting tour, some whisky samples and no-one had to twist my arm to buy a bottle of their single malt - only available from the distillery.

So far, so good - I shall be back in 2019 to do the final 70 miles between Dornoch and Wick.

David Hodge

The West Highland Way

I have just walked the West Highland Way --- 95 miles from Glasgow to Fort William. It is a long distance path that most long distance walkers have done so I definitely felt I was missing out and must rectify it! I went with a German friend whom I had met 4 years earlier on the S W Coastal Path. We had met once since then, when she came to walk the South Downs Way, so it was quite a gamble to be spending 7 days walking and sharing a bedroom and she is over 20 years younger than I am but it couldn't have gone better. We walked at the same pace, seemed to need stops at the same time and neither of us snored!

The walk is magnificent. For those of you who haven't done it, there are a few tough climbs but on the whole it is just a wonderful hike through beautiful scenery. During the Walk we passed Loch Lomond, Loch Tulla and Loch Leven and overlooked Loch Linnhe for our last night in Fort William.

We climbed Conic Hill on the second day between Drymen and Rowardennen, the Devil's Staircase when we left the Glencoe Mountain Resort, and a very steep incline out of Kinlochleven. Otherwise it was all very manageable. We had lovely sunshine as we crossed Rannoch Moor, with a delightful pause at Ba Bridge.

I liked the sign 'What a Mess' as we walked over to Fort William. The area was strewn with twigs, branches and leaves from all the forestry work but we were assured it was all for a reason ... bugs, insects and birds live off what they can find amongst it.



Loch Lomond and the Arrochar Alps, seen from Conic Hill during Day 2

We had booked through Mac Adventure, who did a grand job. We enjoyed taking the ferry across Loch Lomond to one of our overnight stays at Ardlui. Another night there was a shuttle to the Clachaig Inn in Glencoe ... maybe the best stay of the week. On two occasions we unexpectedly came across refreshment places ... such a treat! One was the Cherry Tree Café which had only been open a month and was a shed under a cherry tree but the coffee was divine! ... and as for the Wigwam Place near St. Fillan's Priory where we bought an ice cream on a very hot afternoon which certainly helped us on the last 2 miles!

My German friend was very keen to try anything Scottish ... we did very well on the beers and lagers! We ate haggis and black pudding and were very taken with the vegetarian haggis. On the last night I had 'cullen skink pie', a sort of soup made from smoked haddock and salmon with a pastry lid. It was delectable!

We enjoyed it so much but my companion did comment that it was quite crowded at times with people from all over the world. I couldn't find anyone who looked as old as I do ... the nearest, that I dared ask, was 3 years younger than me! I was dismayed at two people we passed who were listening to radios as they walked, especially as they could have listened to the cuckoos singing all the way along, but my friend pointed out that it was better that the youngsters walked and listened rather than lying on a sofa to listen. I must learn to be more tolerant!



Journey's end - seated by the 'Sore Feet' statue in Fort William,

We had wonderful sunshine the whole way and I certainly rate it a great success.

Joan Wortley

An Ecclesiastical Odyssey

On a cold Wednesday November morning I decided to jump on the train and travel up to London to hopefully join members of the London Group for what could be an intriguing and very interesting day out. The walk was advertised to start at 11 o'clock and would be around 11 miles. Clearly not a typical LDWA walk in terms of its length but on this occasion that would not really be the point. The walk was titled An Ecclesiastical Odyssey and the objective of the day would be to visit all 58 Churches and standing Towers listed by the Friends of London Churches. Most of these would be within the boundary of the City of London.

Some 20 of us accumulated outside Barbican underground station where our leader Ron would provide us with a two page handout listing all the 58 of the Churches and towers in the order

that they would be visited. To create more interest and challenge, any section of road may only be used once and the route must not cross itself at any time. Well, in reality it would only be our leader that would have to concern himself about this and clearly he knew a route that would meet these criteria. He did say that it would be a long 11 miles and on evidence from the last time it was done the finishing time would probably be around 5pm.

And so we set off. Each holding the list whilst eagerly looking ahead for each Church or tower in turn ticking them off as we went if not by pen, in the head. Along roads, thoroughfares, rows, terraces, side streets, lanes and alleys passing many famous sights that the City of London provides. Some we would merely pass, just ensuring that we saw the name on the board outside, others we would briefly enter to catch sight of the splendid internal architecture and features on offer. Our leader would not let us stand still for long (it was too cold anyway) or we would run out of time. By the time of the lunch stop at Cannon Street station (Wetherspoons – one of 150 in London?!) at 1.35pm, there were 23 churches down which meant there were still another 35 to go.

Our list of Churches included not just the name and street but a brief description of each to no doubt broaden our knowledge. For example, St Olave's in Hart Street was the final resting place of Samuel Pepys and his wife and the Bevis Marks Synagogue is the oldest surviving English synagogue, 1699-1701. Number 21 on the list would be St Clements in Eastcheap as in "Oranges and Lemons" where Spanish Oranges were offloaded. The paperwork also provided information on the Churches by Sir Christopher Wren's Office and those which survived the Great Fire of London and those that were damaged in the blitz and by IRA bombs.

The first church after lunch would be St Michael Paternoster Royal in College Hill which is where Dick Whittington prayed and is buried. As the afternoon progressed we were ticking off more and more. Highlights included St Brides in Fleet Street, reputedly the earliest Christian site in the City of London, where there are fragments of a Roman pavement of the second century AD behind the crypt chapel (apparently St Brides is a corruption of St Bridget who changed well water into beer – interesting!). To find number 30 - Temple church - we would have to wind ourselves through the renowned centre for English Law. Number 36 would be St Mary-le-Bow which houses the famous Bow Bells. The light was fading as finally we headed towards Holborn and the last half a dozen. They were coming thick and fast now and with the time at 4.57 pm we hit on St Alban the Martyr in Brooke Street. The mission had been completed.

This 11 mile pounding of the streets of London was immensely interesting not just for the churches but also for experiencing the sights and sounds of the City. We all had to admire our leader Ron for taking us on a journey without repetition, deviation, hesitation or indeed reference to any map. Only he knows how he remembers the route so well!

Trevor Beeston

The Cinque Ports 100 Marshals' Walk

I woke at 6am on the morning of Saturday 5th May, Marshals' Walk day! Plenty of time to be in the car for an 8am start on the drive to Hastings. Feet had been taped up the night before so it was just breakfast, dress in chosen kit and remember to breathe. Before I knew it, 7.55, then panic - still to Sudocrem feet, water in bottle, pick up mobile, pick up trainers, kiss dog goodbye. On the road at 8.15!

We pulled up outside the college building at about 9am, can't really remember, it was all becoming a bit of a blur. Found my way inside the building and was directed to the control room. There were lots of friendly faces and the usual rumble of conversations, and I was handed an envelope but instructions were difficult to understand! Last minute preparations were executed and snatched conversations with familiar faces all exchanging the same feelings of

anxious anticipation. Finally, we were directed outside into the sunshine for the start. After a few words from Graham and Steph, we were finally off, at long last, the agonising wait was over!

The walk to the seafront and beyond was easy, chatting to a number of people I knew, and a few I didn't. It was just another walk!!! By the time we got to the Dolphin pub and going up the steps, I couldn't see the guys at the front. From then on it was down to business, just one foot in front of another, keep fuelled, hydrated, but most of all enjoy the moment. The first checkpoint soon appeared - warm sausage rolls, a real treat, quick drink and off again.

As I walked into Rye, it was very busy, only to be expected on such a beautiful day, so a mildly assertive stance was taken and I just marched straight ahead walking round the tourists, straight up the beautiful Mermaid Street and through the town to the next checkpoint, where I was greeted with a huge hug by the lovely David Weatherley - not sure he'd have been so keen to hug me 36 hours later! *(Editor: Lovely? Only 12.4 miles walked but Jane was already hallucinating!!)*

After leaving CP2 I was feeling fairly settled, despite the heat I was quite comfortable and well within my very generous schedule. The next few checkpoints were passed through and the heat of the day was dropping, Tenterden checkpoint was reached, a delicious piece of quiche then on to Appledore for supper and my first meet up with my lovely Dave, my supercrew!

Leaving Appledore, darkness had descended, so it was headtorch and jacket time. As I approached the marshes, a remarkable chirruping sound greeted me. I was reliably informed that this was frogs!! The sound stayed with us all night, it became quite comforting and kept spirits up listening out for the silliest chirrup!

Dawn was breaking and a warm red glow lit up the sky as I was passing Port Lympne. Sadly nothing more exotic than large patches of mud and brambles to be seen, but a glorious view at the top of quite a steep climb was well worth the effort. To add to the amazing view, supercrew Dave and Daisy dog were waiting patiently.

I knew that breakfast wasn't far away. In addition, my lovely pal, Vikki, had offered to walk with me for the day and she arrived just as I was finishing my breakfast, perfect timing! We gathered our stuff, said our goodbyes to the checkpoint staff, and waved the lovely Dave goodbye. It was another beautiful warm day and we set off in high spirits towards Folkestone. I was starting to feel a bit tired and my pace was dropping, but it was fairly flat and Vikki's company was a great distraction. We arrived at the Folkestone checkpoint, up the stairs and were greeted by the lovely staff and their hummus crackers!!!

After a much needed refuel, it was off up the steps to Dover!!! I don't think I can adequately describe the complete and utter horror of this stage. It was like being part of some disaster movie - the sun beating down unmercifully, sea breeze drops, children and dogs running out of control everywhere and, finally, **THE STEPS!!!** Dave very thoughtfully met us with a couple of Magnums just before we started the final ascent!!! All I'm going to say about the steps is that there were lots, it was hot, and I never thought I'd see the top. Then it was all over, and Dave was waiting at the top with a big hug.



THE STEPS safely negotiated, Jane leaves the Dover checkpoint with her motivation guru (and a banana)

Things started to become a blur now. Every step was difficult and motivation was dropping fast. I was really struggling. Vikki was brilliant, gently cajoling me on and eventually we struggled into the checkpoint. The staff knew exactly what was wrong, and after a short nap, some food and drink, I was rejuvenated. Off we set, passing the castle, took in the amazing view of the port,

and finally found the lighthouse!!! (they are very well camouflaged!!!). St Margaret's loomed, and Vikki's car.

This is where Vikki showed her true colours!!! She sent the following text to Dave - "*I'm going to deal with Jane*". He assumed that since Deal was the next checkpoint, she was going to continue with me, rather than take any other action!!! Off we set in failing light with only my headtorch to light the way - Vikki hadn't planned on being with me for more than 20 miles. We laughed our way through the woods and along the edge of that never-ending field, and eventually we hit Deal seafront. Tiredness came upon me once again, and very quickly, each step was a real effort. Once again, Vikki gently cajoled, guided me past the drunks, and then we were there - Deal Town Hall with my lovely Dave and Mayor Dave to greet us, plus of course the untiring checkpoint staff. Once again sleep was required, so whilst Dave drove Vikki back to her car, I took the opportunity to have some zzzzzzzz.

Dave returned and the lovely checkpoint staff advised me that I was close to my time allowed, so needed to leave promptly! Off I set with Dave to Sandwich, along the seafront, across the golf course, the time galloped by, the end was in sight and I was feeling great. Dave returned to Deal to pick up the car and after refuelling, I set off for Northbourne. Just over 10 miles to go, having thought at Dover it was all over, the end was in sight!!! I picked up the pace, this was it, nothing was going to stop me now.

The sun was coming up, another beautiful dawn, a few miles to go and there was the lovely Dave and Daisy dog coming towards me. A piece of toast and marmalade to keep me going and I was off again - just over 5 miles to go!!!

I was dreading this stage, through Sutton Court farm. In the past the gates have been difficult, electric fences to get through and mud!!! However, apart from one gate dropping on my big toe - couldn't feel it anyway - it was easy. Now it was just up the long track to Maydensole. Once again, the lovely Dave and Daisy suddenly appeared - great to have company up that track, and there it was, the farm. I decided that a beer was in order, a quick chat with the lovely checkpoint staff and I was off. I skipped (well it felt like skipping!) along the road to the NDW marker. Emotions were running high now and I was pleased to be on my own as the enormity of what I was about to achieve was realised. Turn sharp right on the road at Pineham, left at the T junction, cross the bridge, turn right, pass the church on the right and left across the field at the cream house. I could have done the last bit blindfolded. Along the alleyway and I was there. Dave and Daisy were waiting at the barrier, across the car park and into the hall, I'd done it - 100.4 miles, over!

Jane Macefield

7. 2019 - Un paseo por España?

The committee is considering the feasibility of, and options for, a walking break in Spain at some stage next year. If you think you might be interested in taking part please check the [website](#), on which in due course details will be posted.



A sincere "thank you" to those who have provided material for this edition