



Long Distance Walkers' Association

SUSSEX GROUP

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



The final outing of 2017: 20 thirsty walkers storm up Mount Caburn on a crisp December morning en route to Telscombe via The Harveys Tavern in Lewes ...



... and the first of 2018: a bemused walker and her dogs are wished 'Good Morning!' 37 times as she strolls uphill away from Alfriston.



*Shotley 50 Challenge, September 2017 ...
Sussex Group entrants awaiting the off.*

NEWSLETTER January 2018

1. Chairman's Chat

In pursuant of healthy lifestyles, walking is no longer overlooked as a decent form of exercise, and it is said that walking briskly can help you build stamina, burn excess calories and make the heart healthier. LDWA membership is also increasing. Record numbers in 2017. Whether there is a direct correlation with this and/or the low cost of membership and LDWA Challenge Events we don't really know. The membership increase was reflected locally with 353 members nominating Sussex as their primary group and 442 as one of their associate groups by the year end. Each time we sent a message out to members reminding them of our next walk, the number of emails sent increased.

During 2017 we built upon previous years in attracting members to join the regular group walks. Thanks to our Walks Organiser, Manfred Engler, we put on a programme of 25 led-walks (one cancelled due to the London to Brighton bike ride!). As with past years the turn out was good towards the beginning of the year (New Year Resolutions?!), drifted away during the summer, but increased again resolutely in the autumn as the summer holidays became a distant memory. For the first time in recent years we hit the 30 mark with Joan's "Circular Walk from East Dean" on 4th March (*to then be surpassed with 37 on our first walk in 2018*). It was great to see a number of new faces and lets hope this will continue. I am acutely conscious that the majority of our walks were yet again in East Sussex. This simply reflected where the majority of our active members were located and most importantly, where those that were willing to lead walks presided. I thank all those that led walks during the year to make it a success.

2017 saw the Group organise two Challenge Events. Another successful South Downs Marathon in May was followed by a new event in September titled the "Sussex Loops" (details below) based in Forest Row. This inaugural outing would attract walkers only in a bid to test the water for an event with one main checkpoint and single water points on each loop. Whilst the actual numbers were relatively low, the feedback was very positive. With what was learnt, it has been proposed to open it to runners in 2018. Particular thanks to our Event Organiser, Chris Baines-Holmes for yet another year of hard work making both events look seamless. Not forgetting all the marshals and the work done at base. For the first time we used the electronic recording system PACER to log in and record entrants times etc. Thanks to David Hodge for ensuring that the system worked successfully and for maintaining the website. 2017 also saw the Group support Surrey by providing the food to hungry walkers after 31 miles on the Surrey Tops 50. Next year we have a commitment to run a checkpoint on the Whitecliffs 50 before the third event of the Triple Challenge returns to Sussex in 2019.

June saw our third annual trip away. Following the Isle of Wight and Dorset in previous years, 2017 saw a group of 11 head north to Yorkshire for four days walking based in Settle. Highlights included the climb of Ingleborough, Gordale Scar, Malham Cove and a great walk from Kirkby Stephen to Garsdale along the ridge above Mallerstang valley. Many Thanks to David Weatherley for organising the trip and leading the walks.

As we move into 2018, the Committee look well placed to continue to co-ordinate a programme of group walks and two challenge events. We hope also to hold another excursion away this time in the Peak District. However, as with many other voluntary organisations, the issue of future resources has now become an issue that must be addressed. The Group has a small pool of regulars that help organise, marshal and lead walks. It will not be long before we will have to call up new members from the subs bench to take over. Unfortunately, the subs bench is looking rather bare at the moment. The Committee would welcome any ideas as to what we could do better to attract more members to become actively and regularly involved with our Group.

Happy Walking.

Trevor Beeston, Chairman

LDWA Sussex Committee, January 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:	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

Sussex Loops 10th September 2017 – Event Report.

To recap – this event comprised three loops, all of which started and finished at Forest Row Village Hall. Entrants could choose to walk the South Loop only or the South and North Loops or all three. This choice was made when the person entered the event.

The Numbers.

Route	Booked	Non-starters	Finished
S loop only	5	0	5
S + N loops	15	3	12
S + N + W loops	44	7	37
Totals	64	10 (15.6%)	54

Forest Row Village Hall – Event HQ.

The Hall provided a spacious and well equipped HQ for this event. The lack of local parking restrictions allowed most of the marshals to park nearby. The tiny car park attached to the Hall allowed the waterpoints to be easily serviced.

Catering.

As the walkers returned to the Hall on completion of each loop food and drinks were provided from about 11.30am until the end of the event. Sandwiches and savoury biscuits were on the menu until about 4pm, then beans on toast.

Route and Waterpoints.

The three Loops provided a variety of landscapes. The South Loop toured the heathland of the northern Ashdown Forest, the North the rolling farmland and woods to the north east of Forest Row while the West explored the northern edge of the Weir Wood Reservoir and the Forest Way. A waterpoint was provided on each Loop, used as much to keep track of the walkers as to refresh them.

Chris Baines-Holmes, Challenge Events Organiser



One of the magnificent bangles, part of a Middle Bronze Age (ca. 1400-1250BC) hoard, discovered in the vicinity of Lewes a few years ago: they are unique to East Sussex and are known within the archaeological community as 'Sussex loops'

Competitors hard at it (!) on the South loop of the inaugural event.



Sussex Loops 2017 Feedback

FANTASTIC EVENT!! Thank you all for arranging such a great walk. Best wishes Sophie

*Many thanks for Sunday's Sussex Loops. Avoiding most of the few raindrops along the way I thoroughly enjoyed all 3 loops. Please pass on my thanks to all those poor souls standing outside at checkpoints, and of course those helping in the hall. I do hope it is repeated next year. **[yes, we plan to]** Thanks again. Jeff*

Just wanted to say "thank you" for a really enjoyable Sussex Loops event on Sunday. Lovely route, great checkpoints, friendly marshals, marmite sandwiches & malt loaf - the perfect event! Even the soaking at the end was fun. Thanks! Louise

Thank you to everyone for putting on this event. All 3 loops were lovely and the 3rd one took me on to new paths. We were well looked after and a very clear RD returned us back to Forest Row 3 times (with a bit of confusion at one point) - result! Many thanks to all. Tara

Forthcoming Events

LDWA South Downs Marathon – 13th May 2018

The Group's annual Challenge event, based at East Dean since 2010, will take place again this year and some route variations are planned. If you wish to take part full details of the event can be found on the Group website. The success of this event is dependant on a plentiful supply of marshals. If you would like to help on the day please contact me on 07977 810964, or 01273 772076, or at chrisbainesholmes@gmail.com.

Chris Baines-Holmes, Challenge Events Organiser

3. Group Walks

<i>Social Walks Programme as at January 2018</i>				
Date	Walk	Start	Miles	No. walkers
2017				
29/07	Burwash and beyond	Burwash	21	18
12/08	Ditchling and The Downs - revisited	Devil's Dyke	20	13
03/09	Lewes roundabout (Note 1)	Lewes	21	
17/09	Huggett's, Harlot's and other farms innumerable	Blackboys	17	9
30/09	A few steps on the 1066 line	Battle	18	9
08/10	Kent peaks - Tunbridge Wells (Note 2)	Tunbridge Wells	22	
21/10	Weir Wood wonder	Horsted Keynes	19	5
05/11	Many views of Cuckmere	South Hill Barn	16	20
19/11	Firle circular	Firle Beacon	17	16
02/12	In the Jugg again	Telscombe	16	20
17/12	Christmas walk and lunch	Alfriston	10	
2018				
07/01	First of the year	Firle	12	37
27/01	Harbour and heights	Seaford	18	
10/02	Jerome's Crawley appearance	Crawley	19	
24/02	Waldron walkabout	Waldron	17	
03/03	AGM	Sussex Ox	10	
10/03	Joan's Jolly	East Dean	17	
24/03	TBA	TBA	20	
14/04	At the chalkface	Eastbourne	21	
29/04	A quick Kentish canter	Forest Row	20	

Notes: 1. Joint walk with The Sussex Sunday Walkers; 2. Joint walk with the LDWA Kent group

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

4. Musical & Cultural Events

In October a group of us went to Glyndebourne to see Rossini's *Barber of Seville* (for our Chairman and a couple of others, it was the first visit to the barber for many years!). The opera was very good - nice scenery and effects, and as always, lovely singing. All ended happily. We met before the show for a drink and some nibbles. Due to my advanced publicity skills, we had a total of 26 people. Most were LDWA, and the rest were friends of ours who wanted to come along. So we spread our picnic over 3 tables on the balcony, and filled them all. Special points were awarded to the Mitchell Brothers. Not the ones from EastEnders, and not even brothers really: our own Anthony Mitchell made very fine millionaire's shortbread, and my friend Steve M brought a pile of lovely rock cakes.

We propose to repeat the visit in 2018. The tour productions will be Verdi's *La Traviata* and Massenet's *Cendrillon* (a French version of *Cinderella*). Glyndebourne have not published the exact dates yet, but it will be October/November. The committee will take a vote on which opera to see, and pick a date (probably around the last week of October). I am happy to organise this, if we can get a group of 12 or more (booking as a group allows you to book 2 weeks earlier than individuals, so you can get seats together). We will put details on the group website in 2018. We were pleased that 8 people came this year in response to the notice on the website (and we hope you will come on more group walks, and maybe lead a walk or help out on checkpoints !)

Chris Coates, Cultural Correspondent

5. Miscellany

SOS (Save Our Summits)

It is not unusual for the solitude of a walk in The Lake District, Snowdonia or the Scottish Highlands to be disturbed by the sound of a helicopter, sometimes close by, often operating unseen on the far side of a ridge. One's thoughts turn to the challenges being faced by its crew and to the well-of whoever is being rescued: perhaps an injured climber, or someone out of his or her comfort zone and crag-fast, or simply an inexperienced walker lost and exhausted. Even worse, perhaps the task is that of recovering a body? On several such occasions I have been jolted out of this reverie by a sight of the aircraft, not a large and bright yellow 'Search & Rescue'



The idyll

Sea King but a smaller Park Services machine delivering a load of stone for use to repair a path.

On a typical summer day the summit of Snowdon can be a congested place. On a Three Peaks Challenge day, when thousands try to reach its top, together with those of Scafell Pike and Ben Nevis in less than 24 hours, the Llanberis path can be a motorway carrying Lycra-clad, nipple-chafed competitors. But, unlike a motorway, it isn't paved – and so the walkers' feet are wearing it away. The BMC, together with high profile individuals such as Sir Chris Bonington, is urging people to contribute to a fund to repair the paths on our most popular peaks in an attempt to prevent the return of scars on slopes that in many places have reached the width of a real motorway. *“On popular routes, we start off with a lovely grassy footpath, and feet start to do the damage,”* Sir Chris has said. *“Once the grass has been taken away and it has got a bit muddy, the water does the rest. Then people avoid the mud by walking slightly to one side. You end up with a broad, badly eroded section that is not pleasant to walk on or look at.”*



Behind the scenes

Money and volunteers are sought: for example the National Trust is currently appealing for donations and is hoping to raise the £250,000 to enable rangers and volunteers repair and upgrade two and a half miles of paths in Snowdonia.

"You can't bring that thing in here!!"

Sometime during the night of the 2017 Sussex Stride a walker appeared in the cafeteria of the Longhill School leisure centre with a large and very muddy dog. The leisure centre manager, who is responsible for the letting and management of the cafeteria, happened to be on-site, repairing a walker who had fallen out with a barbed wire fence. The manager pointed out that, as the cafeteria was used for the preparation and serving of food, it was subject to all sorts of hygiene regulations. Had a passing hygiene regulator dropped in, as they do at 3am on a Sunday morning, the school or the LDWA could have been subject to a £500 fine. This was the most recent in a line of canine incidents which included a dog abandoned at a SDM checkpoint and some biting (*by dogs, not of dogs ...*).

The LDWA's insurers state that the Public Liability Insurance cover for challenge events excludes dogs. On social walks they are allowed, subject to the wishes of the walk leader.

Chris Baines-Holmes

A Sussex Group limping living legend ...

Back in 2006, I received a "20" badge and commemorative paperweight from the National Committee of the LDWA in recognition of my successful completion of twenty 100-mile Challenge Events. Here are a few brief recollections of those Events:

- 1984 Dartmoor: first completion. Walked last 70 miles with Tony Twyman, who was a shade eccentric (even by our standards!). Remember him thrashing his legs with nettles at 83 miles, to try to cure cramp. Ran last 4 miles, to get under 32 hours.
- 1985 Yorkshire: included the 3 Peaks, except the top 300 feet or so of Whernside. Torrential rain on Saturday, snow on Pen-y-ghent, followed by a heatwave on the Sunday. Discovered the joys of Germolene to repair the nether regions.
- 1986 Downsman: hard on the feet. Fastest completion (28:41) – supporters' car didn't catch me till Jevington. Collected from finish by my friend Terry, who had offered to drive as Margaret was expecting our first child. Inexplicably taken to visit the Mormon Temple at East Grinstead on way home to Surrey.
- 1987 Snowdonia: not easy, but spectacular. Sunday morning walk down the coast from Portmadoc to Harlech was nice.
- 1988 White Peak: zipped round this one. Changed shoes at 8 miles, as a blister was coming. Had a nice pint near Chatsworth on the Saturday evening. Memorable toilet break, just after dawn, on top of the aptly named Lose Hill. Snow showers on the Roaches. Finished early enough to have a bath and go to the pub for a pint and dinner.
- 1989 Brecon Beacons: a bit hilly! Over the Brecon Beacons (all of them) on Saturday, and back across the grain of the Black Mountains on Sunday. With a steep 1100 foot climb at 90 miles.
- 1990 Chilterns: not much fun. The route was in loops, so you sometimes saw people who were 30 miles ahead of you. This was the only time I had a serious blister, which needed some management, and this the first time I went into the second night. Got lost after dark on Sunday (walking with someone who claimed to know where he was going, but didn't!). There was a problem with the showers at the end, so had to wash under a cold tap before getting the train home across London. Funny looks on the Underground!
- 1991 Lancashire: this was the first one where I travelled with the Sussex Group. Pub lunch on the way up, then out on a pub-crawl round Morecambe. Hard to get going the next day after 8 pints but the walk was OK. When I finished, my bags were in Bernard Clifford's car, and he was away supporting brother Paul, who was about 25 miles behind me. Eventually gave up waiting and got a taxi to the hotel. Had a bath, and realised that the only clean clothing I had left was – one sock. Still slept though!
- 1992 North Downs: miles of North Downs Way, and even more miles of concrete tracks, in a heatwave. Needed a huge amount of water on the Sunday.
- 1993 Cleveland: some long slogs across the moors, interspersed with lovely places. This was the one where they had problems with distances: some people thought it was as much as 108 miles. Presented with "10" badge at the end.
- 1994 Dartmoor: why did I start again? We had a lovely long family weekend staying in a farmhouse, spoilt only by me doing another 100. Bum started hurting at 20 miles, but I got to 80 miles before remembering that I had Napisan cream in my bag, which worked like magic...
- 1995 Shropshire: travelled with the Group again, with Group legend Jim Wild in the party (in his late seventies, and walked in jacket and tie). Followed Jim's lead and switched to Whisky Macs after 8 pints, by which time we'd had fish and chips, and were in a Karaoke bar with Paul Clifford singing "My Way". Kept awake most of night by room-mate Jim talking in his sleep about living wills. Hard to get going on the walk: might have dropped out at breakfast, but someone washed my feet with hot water and pushed me out again. Felt better at the end than I did at the start!
- 1996 Yorkshire again: very strange day. Felt fine up until the morning of the walk, but was totally out of sorts – my head was somewhere else. Met family at 29 miles, dropped out and went for a nice meal in the pub at Buckden.

- 1997 Downsman again: a bit slower this time. I did the main event, which was less memorable than the Marshals' Walk, when I offered my frame tent for the checkpoint on Firle Beacon. It was wet and very windy: we had problems getting the tent up, and needed help from the first walker to arrive, Ken Falconer. Tied the tent to 2 cars to hold it down.
- 1998 Peak District again: a different route, of which I remember very little apart from a stony track near the end.
- 1999 Durham: we stayed in a cottage which had no electricity or gas, so educational for the kids! Hard walk on the Pennines, and memorable as I shaved off my moustache in the bath after the walk, which surprised the family.
- 2000 Kent: I was working away in Libya, so was well prepared for a heatwave (see 1992, above). But it was cold, and rained, all night, and I was heading for hypothermia. Was going to drop out at breakfast, but I saw people who had already dropped out shivering on the floor while waiting for transport, and I decided that I'd live longer if I kept moving. So I set off, the weather cleared and the sun came out. Still had to walk through knee-deep floods on the Sunday, but got to the end OK.
- 2001/2002 Lakeland ... postponed a year to 2002 due to foot & mouth disease (in cattle, not the LDWA) ...
 ... began with 2 miles uphill from B&B in Windermere to the start; then the event soon hit high, rocky ground. Even walking round Crummock Water was difficult, on the Sunday morning, although the place is lovely. Walked with 2 chaps, Phil and Dixon, from around 70 miles. At 90 miles, in the dark just after Grasmere, we were going through a gate and Phil disappeared behind us. I found him lying on the ground, apparently unconscious; this was only 4 days after I'd passed my First Aid course at work, but I wasn't knackered then. After a few minutes he came to and asked if he'd just had a minor epileptic fit, so I said "Yes, I knew that". He got up and carried on, although he collapsed twice more before the end. The marshals at the last checkpoint took no notice when I told them this guy was in trouble, and let him proceed, which meant that Dixon and I had to walk with him. It turned out that he was a runner, and expected to finish in 30 hours, so he had only carried epilepsy medicine for one night. We finished, and all crashed out in the hall for 4 hours or so before walking to the station to go home.
- 2003 Wensleydale: another jaunt round Yorkshire, with no great problems. Went by train, but couldn't find a B&B in Ripon, so slept on the floor at the school before and after the walk. Ouch.
- 2004 Exmoor: I had torn my Achilles tendon while running in March, and was waiting for an operation. Decided to go and start the event, as I'd never been to Exmoor. But I saw sense at 30 miles and dropped out when it started to hurt.
- 2005 Chilterns again: better than the previous one, but what is it about the Chilterns? The showers at the end were about 400m from the hall, and there was no hot water again. I believe they'd forgotten to change a timeswitch.
- 2006 Cheviots: another hard one, with minimal support for many miles over the hills. There was a problem in the night, and I later found that David Mitchell from Wessex had a heart attack. I saw his boots, where he was lying up near the top of a hill with marshals round him, but didn't realise how serious it was. The rest of the route was much easier, and I did the second half quicker than the first half (for the only time). Finished, and found that you don't get another badge for 20, not even another "10". Until now – they sent me a glass paperweight and I finally have something to show off! I stopped doing 100s after this, due to problems with eyes, knees, and a sudden attack of common sense!

Chris Coates

Monarch of the glen ... soon to be deposed?

*"Look at that b****y big rabbit!!"* yelped my friend as we emerged from woods on the outskirts of Groombridge whilst walking the Tunbridge Wells circular. The 'rabbit' stood around 2ft tall and sported short curved horns.

I don't suppose muntjac deer were seen in the Erdington suburb of Birmingham in the days when my friend was a youngster there, but now they might well be. The species is native to southern Asia and first appeared in the UK when in 1893 the 11th Duke of Bedford introduced them into his estate at Woburn. Some were later set free, others escaped, and the English

countryside proved very accommodating for the species; not only do the deer thrive in rural areas but they have colonised parks and thickets in many big towns in the south of England. These so-called 'Asbo Bambis' have spread as far north as Loch Lomond and their reputation for destroying young trees and crops is such that they are being shot on sight by rangers from Scottish National Heritage.

Red deer in the highlands of Scotland reign supreme but they had better be on their guard ... my friend's "*b****y big rabbits*" are approaching ever-closer ...



Current



Monarch of the glen

22nd century?

"You won't believe this, but ..."

During the evening of November 17th last year Mike Naylor was named the World's Biggest Liar in the latest round of the annual contest that is held at the Bridge Inn at Santon Bridge in West Cumbria.

The contest has its roots in the antics of Will Ritson, a 19th century Wasdale farmer's son who ran the hostelry that is now The Wasdale Head Inn and in which is Ritson's Bar, a favourite with walkers and climbers. The tiny and remote agricultural hamlet of Wasdale Head boasts of being home to England's highest mountain (Scafell Pike), deepest lake (Wastwater), smallest church (St. Olaf's) and to the world's biggest liar. Ritson was an expert in country ways and folklore and became known for the tall tales he told to gullible tourists (one of whom was the Lakeland poet William Wordsworth) and to well-to-do academic city gentlemen who, wearing hobnail boots and equipped with climbing ropes made from washing lines, were indulging in the then-new sport of rock climbing.

The rules of today's contest are quite simple - locals and tourists take it in turn to attempt to tell the most outlandish tale in eight minutes without the use of a script. Politicians and lawyers are banned from entering because they are adjudged to be too skilled at telling lies. A former Bishop of Carlisle is said to have once won the contest by simply saying "*I have never told a lie in my life.*"

The reigning 'world champion' is a nephew of Joss Naylor, the famous Wasdale farmer and fell runner, and he was born in the hamlet where Will Ritson once lived.

6. 'Your Walk'

Wild Coast Meander

It's not everyone who has a daughter and family living in Johannesburg but when one does and she invites you to join them for a 'Wild Coast Meander', it's very hard to say 'no'! Thus, I found myself meeting up with them in Cape Town early one morning after an overnight flight. Having dropped our luggage at our B&B, we headed straight up Table Mountain guided by our lovely landlady. We didn't make it to the top as a storm was forecast, but we did get wonderful views of Cape Town spread out below.

The next day we drove along the Garden Route to Mossel Bay where we walked part of the Blaize Trail and saw whales playing in the sea as well as many rock rabbits frolicking in the scrub.

After spending a night at Tsitsikamma Manor we headed off for some 'black water tubing' - what an experience. We travelled down the Storm River in large rubber rings. The water level was low so apparently the ride was not too rough but I still acquired several bruises! We spent the night at Port Alfred before continuing on to East London. Here we were picked up by Vernon, who drove us along the Sunshine Coast to the start of our Meander. He was full of information as we drove through the Kei Pass in to the Transkei area. The landscape was a patchwork of fields of simple dwellings, many of which sported a satellite dish. The men often go off to work in the big towns, such as Cape Town and Johannesburg, while the women and children remain in the countryside. We were amused when he pointed out the 'flowers of Transkei' which sadly was all the litter around a settlement. For the most part, the scenery along the Garden Route and Sunshine Coast was varied, interesting and beautiful. We finally reached Kob Inn which was the start of our Meander.



The Wild Coast Meander is a 54-kilometre hike spread over four days. The scenery along that coast north of East London is so spectacular with the waves of the sea roaring all the time. We had to cross many rivers, so had to keep a good eye on tide times. A couple of times we picked up



canoes to cross, once we had a pontoon to catch but the rest we waded through. We were lucky because the water was never higher than our knees though we heard tales of people having to swim across. The walking was varied, sometimes through forests, where we saw mahogany trees, sometimes over rocks, but many miles were along sandy beaches where we could go barefooted and dip in and out of the sea. The sand was often black from titanium deposits which used to be mined in the area but finally became uneconomic so the mines closed down. Our longest day was 21 kilometres and

we had a gale-force wind against us but I loved it all. We had guides to show us the way and point out things of interest. We saw lots of whales, dolphins, crabs, mussels, sand prawns which were used for bait and the bird life was spectacular. We saw a white eagle, ibis, a heron and

many more. We were impressed by the cleanliness of all the beaches. Apparently, people are employed to walk along them every day picking up anything that the tides have brought in.

I loved chatting with the guides and hearing about their lives. Adelaide still washed her clothes in the river. Alex was 43 and still saving up to get married - he needed five cows to pay for his wife. We hired porters to carry our luggage which was a great treat and we were pleased to give the locals a chance to earn some money. Often the porters were women.



We stayed in wonderful hotels right on the coast. They were rustic places but we mostly had a chalet each with a bathroom. Wavecrest Hotel felt very much as if it was once a wealthy colonial home. The food along the meander was good though we were not too keen on the bony lamb curry. The fruit salads at breakfast were delicious.

Our hike finished at Morgan Bay where we were picked up and taken back to East London to fly to my daughter's home in Joburg. After a couple of days there I flew home to England. What a wonderful trip it had been.

Joan Wortley

Three days on the Stanza Stones Poetry Trail

Having tackled at least one Long Distance Path per annum over the last 12 years, 2017 would be different. It would be the first time to consider a short long distance path. In other words a path that can be walked comfortably in less than a week and probably in no more than three days.

With four walkers to consider, the path had to meet a tried and tested formula to suit all needs. This would mean a route with reasonable accommodation, at least one pub at the destination (and hopefully one on route), access to a baggage transfer service, a means to get back from the finish to the start but above all a route that would be mentally and physically stimulating.

A number of "meetings" over the dark winter months to work up the numerous possibilities had achieved absolutely nothing. I would therefore have no choice other than to sort something out myself and turn to the LDWA's Long Distance Path online search facility. The great thing with this is that one can search by a number of criteria. However, all I really needed to do was to decide which region and the minimum and maximum distance. This would not be a challenge event but something to try to enjoy so I inserted 40 to 60 miles and many came up.

Then one appeared out of the mist (or more accurately, list). The Stanza Stones Poetry Trail. I had never heard of it. It would be described as a route that visits glorious high moorland and goes through wooded valleys - from Marsden to Ilkley via Hebden Bridge, Oxenhope and Bingley. I had previously stayed in Ilkley (Dales Way) and Hebden Bridge (Pennine Way) before and Marsden and Bingley must have accommodation and pubs. Surely baggage transfer would be available.

A bit of online browsing and I would find the *Stanza Stones Poetry Trail Guide, Marsden to Ilkley - Short Family walks and 47 mile trail*. Reading on I found out that Stanza Stones was an collaboration between poet Simon Armitage and Ilkley Literature Festival, in association with imove, a Cultural Olympiad programme in Yorkshire. The project which culminated in June 2012

(London Olympic year) saw Simon Armitage write a set of poems inspired by the language and landscape of the Pennine Watershed, which were then carved onto stones across the upland by stone artist Pip Hall, forming a permanent 'Poetry Trail' from Marsden, Armitages' birth place, to the Festival's base in Ilkley. I quickly emailed the details to the other three to get their opinion. There was a unanimous "yea, looks good".

With accommodation and baggage transfer all booked, three of us left the south (and then finally the M25) and headed north to Marsden with the aim of finding six stones each carved with a poem over a route just short of 50 miles. Further reading would establish that each poem describes water in one of its many forms. There would be a Beck (stream or brook in Old Norse dialect) Stone, Puddle Stone, Mist Stone, Dew Stone, Rain Stone and Snow Stone. The weather forecast for the week was "unsettled" and therefore the name of one or more of the Stones could well turn out to be fitting.

Our accommodation at Marsden was not actually in Marsden but on the A62 about two miles away. It was remote but very suitable. Ten minutes too early to check in, we waited looking out over the glorious moorland for the proprietor to turn up. In the meantime, a coach drew up outside and the fourth person of our party stepped out. This coach was a replacement bus service (a strike day on Northern Rail) which for once worked in our favour.

Having finally checked in we would consider our options. The start of the trail is from the railway station in Marsden and two miles back from our accommodation. We had already taken the decision that if the weather was fine, we would do the first two miles in the afternoon so that the next day would be reduced from 18.5 mile to 16.5 miles. The weather forecast didn't bode well for the following day so this looked a good call. We set off in the car to reach Marsden station where it would be parked up for the rest of the week.

Stanza Stones Trail here we go. After around 200 yards the open doors of a rather interesting pub looked to invite us in – well we wouldn't pass this way again and it had been a long drive. Suitably watered we set off for a second time again towards our accommodation along the trail. This would involve a climb up Pule Hill where we would look for the first of our six stones – The Snow Stone. Fortunately we had remembered to bring along extracts from the guide, which included a sketched map of the Stone location. We had printed off the whole guide for later use. As this was the first one we were not too sure what to expect but on entering a quarry we soon spotted a pair of gritstone blocks upon which writing had been carved. This would also be the location of one of two Stanza Stones Poetry Seats. A successful start. The light was fading as we descended to the road and back to the accommodation.

Breakfast was in the conservatory. This was fine but it does accentuate the noise of the rain as it hits the glass roof. We could see the gate across the road which marked the start of the days walk. Unfortunately we couldn't see much beyond that. The scenery from the previous evening had disappeared. Attired with full wet weather clothing we set off across the road and beyond into the cloud on a path that would eventually meet the Pennine Way where we would turn north. The majority of the day's walk would follow the National Trail. This is the section that includes White Hill and Blackstone Edge. The rain came and went during the morning and good views were hard to come by. However, by late morning things started to improve and morale vastly improved as we caught first sight of the White House pub set along side the A58. We even noticed that some drivers had now switched to intermittent wipe. The pub provided the opportunity for a rest and a chance to dry out.

The next section of the Pennine Way is rather uninspiring as it passes alongside drains and reservoirs. However, we had to try and keep alert as soon we would need to track down the next stone – the appropriately named Rain Stone which was located just off the trail over some rough ground. It was an easy win. A sharp shower meant our visit was not long and we soon got back to the main trail. Around the corner Stoodley Pike monument appeared in the distance. It looked close. Half an hour later it still looked close and finally in another half an hour we had nearly

reached it. Our final destination today would be Hebden Bridge which allegedly is the bohemian capital of Yorkshire - and we were nearly there. The accommodation was towards the west of the town and was reached by dropping down through woodland to finally cross a very swollen and fast moving River Calder. The evening was spent in the nearest pub. There was not the necessity, or energy, to venture further.

Refreshed, the next morning we set off towards the town centre. We didn't get a chance to explore as soon we were heading north initially following the Calderdale Way and then up over fields to a village called Chiserley. Weather wise our walk to Bingley would be a better day and mostly dry although rather overcast. Importantly though the low cloud had gone and we could get some decent views. One of two of us may have been lured into some sort of false sense of security thinking that 14.5 miles and better weather would make it an easier and shorter day than the one that had gone before. Descending sharply from Midgley Moor into the valley and climbing again to reach Warley Moor proved time consuming and quite arduous ... and it looked as if we wouldn't reach our lunchtime destination at the Dog & Gun outside Oxenhope until around 2pm - not far short of closing time. We also had to seek out the third stone first - The Mist Stone, before we could be seated in the warmth of the pub. After a long mile walk along Cold Edge Road we took the kissing gate which led us to another quarry. Fortunately there was a "Stanza Stones" way-marked post to help us find it. Which we did. Carrying on the path we headed towards the Thornton Moor Reservoir to our lunchtime stop.

Any concerns that we wouldn't reach Bingley until late based on our progress before the pub soon dissipated as the route from now on would be mainly flat and completely different and easier terrain. Comparatively we attained a good head of steam. We were slowed down for a short while by the highlight of the afternoons walk which would be the option to take the Goitstock and Senior Way and follow the riverside walk where passed a spectacular waterfall. The only tricky thing here would be navigating over slippery tree roots which reminded me of the route of the West Highland Way as it weaves along the bank of Loch Lomond. This however, turned out to be just a short section. With Bingley not far away we crossed the Shipley Golf Course marked by large white boulders to reach Bingley's Myrtle Park. Unfortunately the accommodation was still a little way off as we headed through the town and then up the hill frustratingly away from the centre. Not too far but far enough on quite a challenging day. Once refreshed and a quick drink in the bar we headed back down the hill into Bingley for food and more drink. We felt much better then.

..... And then there were five. For the third and final day to Ilkley we were joined by a resident of Bingley. A walker that we had first met on the Pennine Way and then a subsequent walk in North Yorkshire. Having visited three stones so far it would mean that today we would need to double the catch. Setting off from Bingley station the first 3 miles or so of the Trail today would follow the tow path of the Leeds to Liverpool canal. This section includes the Grade 1 Listed Bingley Five Locks. On reaching Leche's Bridge the Trail headed up the road and out onto moorland to reach the Dew Stone. Just two to go now. No pub stop today so a quick break for a sandwich and drink was had just short of the summit of Black Hill. Here we picked up the Millennium Way and headed east. The shortest route into Ilkley would have been to stick with this path but the Stanza Stones Trail turned south east to reach the West and East Buck Stones (not Stanza Stones) on the crest of a ridge. Not far past a Wireless Station there are a number of rocks and this is where we found The Puddle Stones lying flat on the ground. The Trail then continues east to reach the Twelve Apostles stone circle from which the Dales Way Link Path took us down towards Ilkley and to the second Stanza Stones Poetry Seat. We reflected that if we continued down the path adjacent to the Beck we would reach the final Stone. However, the Trail added a surprise by taking us into a quarry in which there was a large stone which, we read, has some of the best ancient "cup and ring" carving on the top. We were then slightly lost as to how to get back on the Trail to find the Beck Stone. Our persistence and sense of direction got us to it. It was the most hidden yet right next to the Beck although there was a way-marked post. With all the Stones in our pocket and with the rain starting we headed quickly for the town and a celebration drink in the Flying Duck.

The final analysis was that this was an very enjoyable hike in West Yorkshire despite the unfriendly weather conditions on the first day. The tracking down the Stanza Stones gave some added incentive although they are not hard to find. In our opinion the route description in the Stanza Stones guide itself is not comprehensive enough to rely on completely if you are not familiar with the route or area. Therefore, OS maps and/or GPS mapping would be recommended. Most of the route is on OL21. I would certainly recommend this walk if you have just three days to play with.

Trevor Beeston

P.S. There is a rumour that there is a hidden seventh Stone to be found somewhere on the Trail.
Damn!

7. Peak Potter 2018

The 2018 Sussex Group foreign foray will take us to Derbyshire during the week of 25th - 29th June. Our base will be the market town of Bakewell, home of the luscious pudding that bears little resemblance to the imposter 'tart' offered by Mr Kipling and others: from there we will explore a sample of Dark Peak and White Peak areas. 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

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