

Long Distance Walkers' Association

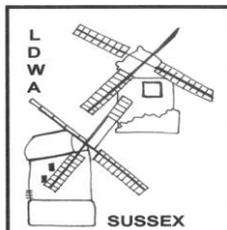
SUSSEX GROUP

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



NEWSLETTER

January 2015



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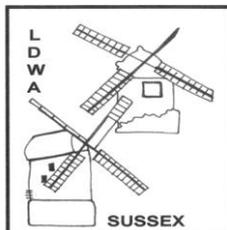
1. Chairman's chat

In the 2014 Summer Newsletter published back in July, I referred to the severe wet conditions of the early months. Of course it did dry out and by the time we got to July it was nice and warm. It turned out to be a good summer in the end with July, August and particularly September a joy for those who participated in our Group walks. It wasn't until October that the weather broke and November turned out to be particularly wet. It wasn't long before some of the scenes we experienced earlier in the year started to reappear. We ran the Sussex Stride Challenge event in September 2013 and so, given that the Stride is part of a Triple Challenge, we now have two years "off" with the event next coming back to Sussex in 2016. However, despite this, members of the Group helped to support the Surrey Tops Challenge by running a checkpoint as well as doing likewise for the Kent Group's one-off revival of the Wealden Waters. I would thank all those members of the group who gave up their Saturdays to help out.

We had high hopes for the two walks that we had agreed to put on for the Eastbourne and Wealden Walking Festival at the end of September and the beginning of October. With on-line entry through the festival website we hoped that we would get a mix of regular and new walkers. Both walks were fully booked in advance and we had expected around 20 walkers on each. However, the numbers that actually turned out on each of the days were disappointing despite two great routes. The Committee will review how to ensure the LDWA best benefits from participation in future such walking festivals.

As it happened, with 22 walks 2014 turned out to be one of the most active and successful years in recent times. Thank you to those who devised led and participated in the walks. We do need more people to become actively involved in the Group whether it is to lead walks, help out at checkpoints or become a committee member. This will ensure that the Group will continue to thrive during 2015 and beyond.

Trevor Beeston – Chairman



2. Group news

LDWA Sussex Committee

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

There still remain vacancies on the committee. Please contact either the chairman or the secretary if you are interested in helping your local Group.

Committee meetings

In the six months since publication of the previous newsletter there have been two committee meetings: 25th September 2014 and 22nd January 2015, both at The Trevor Arms, Glynde.

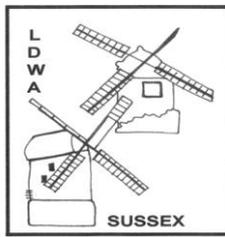
Annual General Meeting

This year's AGM will take place at 19.30 on Thursday 26th February at The Trevor Arms, Glynde. The formal items on the agenda may be familiar to many - the approval of previous Minutes, Committee Report and Statement of Accounts, the election of Committee members etc. - and will be dealt with as speedily as possible. There will then be an opportunity to discuss our approach to the running of the Sussex Group and its general health. So why not come along for a pre-meeting meal and chat, to help your committee shape the future for our Group?

If you do propose to attend - and we hope that you will - please let the Chairman know (email: beestont@aol.com) so that we are able to make the arrangements.

Website

The 'Ad Hoc Walks' section of our website provides a means to alert members to informal walks (i.e. ones not included in the published walking programme) or to enable them to advertise details of an outing on which companions would be welcome. A very enjoyable post-Christmas 19mile circular from Heathfield was advertised in this way and attracted 12 happy walkers.



3. Challenge events

Wealden Waters, 26th / 27th July 2014

Until a few years ago this was a regular event in the Kent Group programme and it was revived as part of the group's 40th anniversary celebrations. Two distances were offered – 101km and 42km - although there were rumours of an extra 7km! Starting at Hawkenbury (a suburb of Tunbridge Wells), the 101km route went via Frant, Balls Green, Ashdown Forest, Nutley, Forest Row, Marsh Green, Bough Beech Reservoir, Haysden Country Park and Speldhurst. The 40km route followed the first and last parts of the longer one, with a link between Balls Green and Speldhurst. The terrain included farmland, fields, woods, open common land and ancient parkland.

The Sussex Group has a long and happy working relationship with the Kent Group and we were invited to marshal CP2 (War Memorial Hall, High Street, Nutley) on the longer route. The building proved to be spacious, well equipped and comfortable. We opened for business at 3.40pm and shut up shop at 7.30pm; in between our workload was not high - the next checkpoint was the 'dinner' stop, so at Nutley drinks and light refreshments were the order of the day.

During the day the weather was oppressively hot and humid, not the best combination for a long walking event. This was no doubt the key factor in the dropout rate for the more demanding route:

<u>Statistics</u>	101km	92 entered, 81 started, 59 finished.
	42km	29 entered, 26 started, 22 finished.

In recognition of the difficult conditions an additional 'mobile' drink stop was provided further along the route. There, in the middle of rural Sussex, ice cold J-cloths were provided... how did they do that?

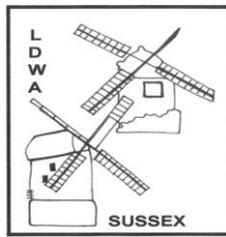
Thank you to each of the Sussex members who helped on the day.

Surrey Tops – 20th / 21st September 2014

This, the Surrey component of the KSS (Kent, Surrey & Sussex) Triple Challenge, is recognised as a tough event: 50miles in 20hr, demanding terrain and checkpoints at intervals of approximately 10miles - a lower density than is usual on LDWA challenge events. Starting at Witley, 'The Tops' follows a circular route through wooded country over many of the Surrey hills on the North Downs and the Greensand Way.

On a KSS event each of the two other participating Groups marshals a checkpoint; on this occasion the Sussex Group was in charge of CP3 in Evelyn Hall at Abinger Common, a few miles west of Dorking, from 6pm to 10pm on Saturday 20th. The Hall is a handsome building situated adjacent to a superb country pub.

CP3 was the dinner stop and was provisioned for a menu designed several years ago by Janet Chapman and a firm favourite with competitors: stew (both carnivorous and vegetarian) with new potatoes, followed by apple pie and custard, together with the usual array of drinks. The



kitchen at the hall is spacious and quite well equipped although the production of stew for 100+ people in a hurry provides something of a challenge, especially when the first group of hungry competitors appears 20minutes before the checkpoint is due to open for business. Working under such conditions can expose hitherto unknown character traits among the helpers – on this occasion one of us revealed an addiction to custard! Still, better than the evil white stuff, although custard does tend to block up one’s nostrils...

On the two previous occasions this event took place in heavy rain, but this year the weather was good and the ground dry.

Statistics 50miles 165 entered, 125 started, 116 finished.

By the time we had cleared everything away and tidied up the pub was closed.... *sigh*...

Once again thank you to each of the Sussex team.

Chris Baines-Holmes – Challenge Events Organiser

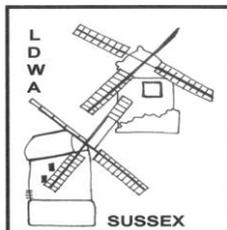
4. Sussex Group Walks

Walks Programme – 2014/15

Date	Walk	Start/Finish	Mileage	No. Walkers
20/07/14	Many views of Cuckmere	Hill Barn, Seaford	20	11
03/08/14	Horsted Keynes	Horsted Keynes	20	13
16/08/14	Arundel & the Downs	Storrington	22	8
07/09/14	Limits of the known universe	Union Street	18	18
28/09/14	Downs, cliff & forest*	Eastbourne	20	13
04/10/14	Wealden circular*	Burwash	20	8
11/10/14	Jerome’s P2P appearance	Pulborough	20	7
02/11/14	3-ringed circus	Lancing	18	8
16/11/14	Circular from Washington	Washington	16	14
28/11/14	Jerome’s unexpected appearance	Burgess Hill	18	13
14/12/14	Christmas walk	Alfriston	10	11
<i>*Organised by the Sussex Group for the Eastbourne & Wealden Walking Festival</i>				
24/01/15	London Jubilee walk – version 5**	Blackfriars station	12	
07/02/15	Wander from Woodingdean	Woodingdean	18	
22/02/15	Loitering around Lewes	Horsdean	18	
14/03/15	SDM 'highlights'	East Dean	21	
29/03/15	South Downs Marathon***	East Dean	28	
11/04/15	The Slindon slipped a bit	Slindon	18	
26/04/15	Rocks and rolls	Birchden Wood	20	

***Date changed from that published in Strider*

****LDWA Challenge Event*



Winter 2014 Half-Yearly Review

Sunday, July 20th 2014 - MANY VIEWS OF CUCKMERE.

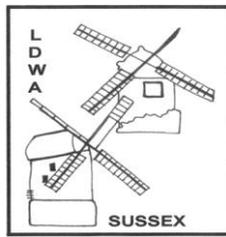
It was a warm and humid morning as we set off from Hill Barn car park making our way east to admire the iconic view of the coastguards' cottages with the Seven Sisters beyond. Turning inland to reach the Cuckmere Inn our group had swollen by one from 10 to 11. We continued alongside the Cuckmere River then up and over open access land to Friston. Our first stop at Friston Hill was welcome as the temperature began to rise. Continuing north we soon hit the Wealdway that would eventually take us past Folkington and then below the Long Man of Wilmington. Picking up the South Downs Way we headed into Alfriston for a well-earned lunch. Two of the group left at this stage only to be replaced by two new faces. Black clouds were gathering but our route up out of Alfriston seemed to take us away from the dark skies. However, we could see rain in the distance and the air was cooler now. Following the climb up to Cradle Hill we could soon see our final destination ahead on the hillside. Everyone agreed it had been a great walk.

Sunday, August 3rd 2014 - HORSTED KEYNES.

It was another sunny morning as 13 of us (and two dogs) assembled at the Horsted Keynes car park. The morning took us across some glorious countryside and along shaded wooded paths to reach the Sussex Border Path and a route adjacent to the Weir Wood Reservoir before heading southwest to West Hoathly for lunch. The prompt restart should have meant a finish ahead of schedule but, having taken a particular physical attraction to each other, two participants decided that the others would just have to wait for them whilst they did as nature intended. Eventually Ben and Meg were brought to heel; now on schedule we continued towards Ardingly then crossed the Bluebell Railway and made our way back to Horsted Keynes. All had a very pleasant and informative day; thanks to Chris for a most interesting nature walk...

Saturday, August 16th 2014 - ARUNDEL AND THE DOWNS.

Eight of us assembled at the car park on Kithurst Hill above Storrington for a walk that was surprisingly flat during the morning. We left the Downs immediately and headed for Parham Park that contains not only the impressive Parham House but some fine old trees. Some road walking was necessary before reaching Greatham Bridge, one of the finest old bridges in Sussex. We followed the path across the Amberley Wild Brooks, one that none of us had used before, then approached the old section of Amberley with its beautiful thatched cottages where we had a break. Continuing past the castle the path took us to the old ferry crossing to Bury - we had often seen the ferry crossing from the Bury side but being on the Amberley side was also a first for us. It was then a case of following the River Arun downstream, at one stage cutting off a particularly large loop and later crossing a substantial suspension bridge. Eventually we arrived at Arundel and stopped for lunch - the Summer Festival was in full swing and so we had to contend with the crowds and various forms of outdoor entertainment. The afternoon was significantly shorter than the morning but did include some hills. Walking through Arundel Park provided not only the steepest section of the walk but also some of the most spectacular views. We passed through Houghton picking up the South Downs Way that we followed over Rackham Hill and back to the car park. We had walked more than 22 miles at a pace that was perhaps a little too fast for a social walk, but the group was not too vociferous in its complaints! The route took us to parts that we have not visited on previous walks and I think this was very much appreciated.



Sunday, September 7th 2014 - THE LIMITS OF THE KNOWN UNIVERSE.

It was a beautiful sunny start to the day as a fleet of cars parked roadside along the B2087 at Union Street, disgorging a motley group for Jane's excursion to the northeastern edge of Sussex. Our route took us south and then east on the Sussex Border Path through typical Wealden scenery of woodland and ghylls, then northwards towards Bedgebury Forest via minor paths and lanes, on the way passing a small Kent group walking in the opposite direction. We paused for a water stop beside Louisa Lake in the company of families enjoying the warm weather and scenic surroundings before turning westwards towards Kilndown and lunch. After a well-earned drink at the Globe & Rainbow we continued through the Weald, skirting Scotney Castle, later traversing Bewl Water before returning to Union Street. The day was a real treat for a happy group of 18 walkers.

Sunday, 28th September 2014 - DOWNS, CLIFFS AND FOREST

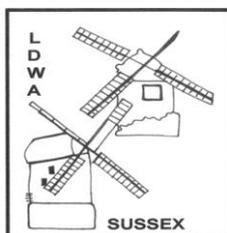
This was the first of two walks that we agreed to devise and lead for the Coast & Country Walking Festival jointly organised by Eastbourne Borough and Wealden District Councils – a new venture for the Group. The format was free participation and on-line booking via the Festival website, thus hopefully attracting both LDWA members and non-members to join us in an all-day walk. We agreed to provide a leader and backmarker and required numbers to be restricted to a maximum of 20 to ensure the group would be manageable, so it was therefore slightly disappointing that only 9 out of 20 that had pre-booked turned up at the start at St Bede's on a glorious day. Two 'late entries' joined us, so it was a group of 13 that set off along the coast to Beachy Head towards the Seven Sisters with the first stop at Birling Gap. The pace necessary to complete the 20mile route was a little too purposeful for the two late entries and therefore we were down to 11 as we left the Sisters and turned inland through Friston Forest to Litlington and then on to Alfriston for lunch. Leaving Alfriston the route followed the Wealdway to Folkington and Jevington and then up to Butts Brow car park on the ridge, and eventually descended back to the coast and Eastbourne seafront. Everyone agreed that this had been a great walk on a lovely day.

Saturday, 4th October 2014 - WEALDEN CIRCULAR

The omens were good for this, the second of the Festival outings that the Group had been invited to organise. During the previous week apologies had been received from two people who needed to withdraw but on the Friday the Festival website showed there was only one space remaining of the 20 available. We were looking forward to spending the day with a substantial group of new companions and it was thus with a great sense of disappointment that we set out from Burwash a little after 08:30 with four others, only one of whom was not a LDWA Sussex member, and a dog. The forecast for the afternoon was unfavourable but the weather was good and the views far-reaching as we headed north and down to the Rother valley. After diverting to Stonegate Station to meet up with two late starters (both LDWA members) we retraced our steps to regain the route through Batts Wood and then Wadhurst Deer Park, where we paused for a brief stand-off with a rather elderly stag that seemed to consider us rivals for the attentions of his group of hinds. We reached Mayfield a little before 12:30 at the same time as the rain, so the familiar 'picnic or pub?' decision was easier than otherwise it might have been. Our return to Burwash was accompanied by some wet and windy weather that did not detract from the classic Wealden countryside through which we passed. All agreed the walk had been very enjoyable – little mud, much humour and great views.

Saturday, October 11th 2014 - JEROME'S P2P APPEARANCE.

The weather forecast was not good and the seven who set off from Pulborough station feared the worst. The Group had not explored the area to the north west of the town in recent times



and it was clear that we had missed out on an attractive undulating landscape peppered with woodlands. The highlight was reaching the historic town of Petworth for lunch. As it turned out the day was much better than forecast with only a few showers. Thanks to Jerome for devising and leading yet another walk for the LDWA.

Sunday, 2nd November 2014 - 3-RINGED CIRCUS

This time the reality matched the forecast. It would be a pretty wet day but this did not dampen the spirits. Starting at Lancing Ring we set off into open downland before reaching the edge of Cissbury Ring. From here we headed north to Chanctonbury Ring. The higher we went the windier it became. We had a short respite between the trees that form the Ring before heading back south where the wind and horizontal rain made it difficult to walk in a straight line. It was much better as we headed down through the trees to reach Steyning and a welcome lunch stop. The rain had eased as we headed back up the Downs to reach the South Downs Way before heading back down and along the River Adur back to Lancing. Thank you and good luck to Alyson & Rob as this would be their last one. A new life in Kuwait beckons where no doubt it will be a lot, lot drier!

Sunday, 16th November 2014 - CIRCULAR FROM WASHINGTON

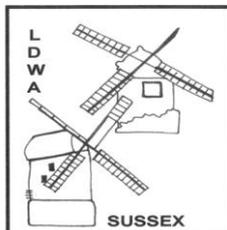
It was a cloudy but dry November morning as 14 of us met in the car park on the South Downs Way at Washington. Safely across the A24 we headed through woodland and open downland to reach the Monarchs Way and west through Michelgrove, the Angmering Estate and then onto Burpham for the lunch stop. The rain came as we started the long slow climb northwards towards Kithurst Hill. It had stopped as we finally reached the South Downs Way and the pace quickened as we headed back east all the way to the car park. Thanks to Kay for leading.

Saturday, 29th November 2014 - JEROME'S UNEXPECTED APPEARANCE

13 people turned up for a walk which had only been put on the website three days earlier: such is the power of the internet; or was it the weather forecast which promised and delivered a glorious late autumn day which at times felt like a touch of summer; or was it perhaps the leader attracting people with some invisible magnetic power? Whatever the reason, it was a superb walk marred only by the porridgy mud that greeted us on many paths with each section having its own unique type. From Burgess Hill we headed south to Ditchling for a break in the church grounds watching Christmas lights being erected. Then a steep pull up to the top of the South Downs and a slow descent on the other side with a cultural stop at the Chattri memorial to the Indian troops. Over the A23 to our lunch stop at the open air Hikers Rest cafe at Saddlescombe Farm, a perfect setting on such a lovely day. A shorter afternoon section took us round Wolstonbury Hill, then on to Hurstpierpoint and its ornate college before returning to Burgess Hill to complete our 18miles just as the light faded.

Sunday, 14th December 2014 - CHRISTMAS WALK

Eleven walkers gathered at Alfriston car park (no festive hats this year) and eagerly set off to enjoy the bright frosty morning. It was not long before the winter sun broke through. The group made their way to Milton Street and crossed the A27 to join the Weald Way that we followed over ice-covered fields. As the sun grew stronger the mud and sodden fields became apparent. A welcome pit stop at the Waterworks site, then onwards towards Arlington Reservoir where a crisp wind blew, heading on towards Berwick Station where we joined the Vanguard Way. Following the route we passed the Turf Farm and admired the scenic views of the South Downs, still bathed in winter sun. After more muddy fields we re-crossed the A27 and headed for The Cricketers where six more present and past members joined us for lunch and carols. Shirley Greenwood kept us in order, Robin's rendition of nine drummers drumming proved to be



effective and all were in good voice. After lunch we toddled over fields past Berwick Church towards Winton Street and walked a final loop over the Downs before returning to Alfriston where, sadly, The Tudor Tearooms were closed. A jolly day spent in the company of friends in our beautiful Sussex countryside. A must each year.

*Thank you to all who have participated in the walks during 2014 and I hope that you will join us on future ones. Particular thanks are due to those who devised the excellent routes and who led on the day. **More walk leaders are needed!** If you would like to lead a walk for the group in the future (from 1st September 2015 onwards) please contact me at beestont@aol.com*

Trevor Beeston, Walks Organiser

5. The LDWA Sussex Christmas choir

Our Christmas carol singing has been a fixture in the walks programme for longer than I can remember. The idea is to have fun but at the same time I've noticed the singing becoming much more tuneful over the years; as I recall we used to be a rather raucous group. I think the tone changed when we gave up trying to sing *The Little Drummer Boy* – we only managed to get through it successfully once. *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* is definitely out! I won't dwell on the way *Twelve Days* came apart this year at verse four because it was redeemed by a very convincing ending. I particularly liked the drumming verse – well done that man! We're going to have to follow that with more actions next year.

The singing from everyone was really uplifting and gave a good Christmassy feel to The Cricketers. Other people in the pub complimented us. What makes the session such a success is the way you all give it a go. We heard some good singing this year from Ron, David H., David W., and Clare, whilst who could forget Helen's five gold rings and Chris's twelve repetitions of the partridge? Did you walk back to Alfriston afterwards Chris?

Same time, same place next year I hope.

The Twelve Days of Christmas is a favourite with the choir and I think most of us believe it to be a secular love song, which indeed it is. However it had a special significance for Catholics, who from 1558 to 1829 were not allowed to practice their faith openly. Each of the verses had a hidden meaning to help young Catholics remember the teachings of the Christian faith:

One partridge – Jesus Christ

Two turtledoves – Old and New Testaments

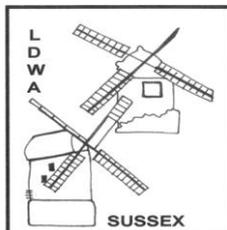
Three French hens – faith, hope and love

Four colly birds – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the four Evangelists. (Colly' in Old English meant 'black as coal', as in colliery, so four blackbirds).

Five gold rings – the first five books of the Old Testament

Six geese a-laying – the six days of creation

Seven swans a-swimming – seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: prophesy, serving, teaching, exhortation, contribution, leadership and mercy.



Eight maids a-milking – the eight Beatitudes
Nine ladies dancing – nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
Ten lords a-leaping – the ten Commandments
Eleven pipers piping – the eleven faithful Apostles
Twelve drummers drumming – twelve points of belief in the Apostles Creed.

Shirley Greenwood

Our way of celebrating Christmas was already a well-established tradition when I was introduced to the Group in 1987. Over recent years Shirley has woven a few innovations into the programme. One of them is the singing of *While Shepherds Watched* to the hymn tune *Cranbrook* (know better as *On Ilkley Moor*) that was written in 1805 by a Canterbury cobbler to replace the original 16th century (dreary) tune. Later in the 19th century during the annual walk by members of the Halifax Wesleyan Chapel the alternative words 'On Ilkley Moor' were substituted. Since then verses have been added and *On Ilkley Moor* is regarded by many as the national anthem of Yorkshire - so the version we sang in *The Cricketers* came before the words of *On Ilkley Moor* and had been popularised by a group of walkers!

A couple of days after the walk I was channel-hopping through the nether regions of daytime Freeview – I'm old so I'm allowed – and I came across another bit of carol history. *O Little Town of Bethlehem* originated in the USA where it is still sung to the tune *St Louis*, whilst in the rest of the English-speaking world the hymn tune *Forest Green* is used. Ralph Vaughan Williams adapted *Forest Green* from an English folk ballad called *The Ploughboy's Dream* that he had collected from a Mr. Garman of Forest Green, Surrey in 1903. A comparison of the provenance of the two carols bears scrutiny:

- *On Ilkley Moor* is a tale of the dangers of hypothermia while courting, the persecution of ducks and third hand cannibalism, whilst the tale it supplanted - *While Shepherds Watched* - is the story of a New Beginning.
- Conversely *The Ploughboy's Dream* is a dark tale of thwarted ploughing, equine abuse and the dreadful fate that could await the perpetrator and has been supplanted by *O Little Town*, another version of that New Beginning.

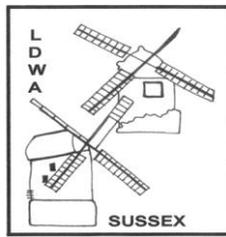
Best wishes for 2015. (PS For further information on the carols consult Wikisomethingorother)

Pathtrekker

6. Miscellany

"Mmm, that smells good! Tell me, what dung do you use?"

During your pre-dawn routine of preparing for a Sussex Group walk do you, like me, agonise over which type of coffee to put into your flask? The instant variety? Quick and easy to prepare



but not very satisfying when imbibed during the brief, rain-lashed respite from the route march. Filter coffee? Much better but it takes a little longer to prepare. If time allows I make a pot of a house blend from a well-known supermarket, on occasion wondering whether next time I should be more adventurous. Should I try a Brazilian variety (heavy and lingering, with chocolate and some spice in evidence), Kenyan (big, bold and juicy) or Ethiopian (syrupy with sweet berry overtones when naturally processed, delicate and floral if the beans have been washed)?

A recent newspaper article has caused me to realise that I should perhaps extend my horizon of possibilities:

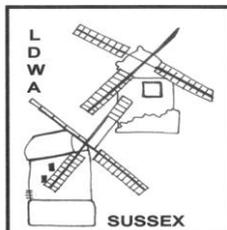
- *Weasel coffee* is made from the seeds of coffee berries that have been through the digestive system of Asian palm civets. The animals pick out and eat the best ones, which then ferment in their intestines before being harvested from their droppings.
- *Kopi joss* is an Indonesian speciality that is made in the normal way before a lump of charcoal is added to neutralise the natural acidity.
- Some Latin Americans drink *guarapo con queso*, hot, sweet coffee in which is melted diced Gouda or Edam cheese.
- Yak butter tea - the traditional drink of the people of the high Himalayas - is the inspiration for the latest US craze - *bulletproof coffee*, aka *fat black*. This is a 500calories-per-cup breakfast brew that includes a dash of a supplement derived from coconut oil and at least two tablespoons of unsalted butter ('organic' butter from grass-fed cows of course... one must think of one's health...).
- In Thailand the locals feed coffee beans to elephants whose digestive system breaks down the naturally bitter taste; they then brew coffee using elephant dung in which the beans are embedded. This puts into a whole new light the well known "*Now, vicar, how do you take your coffee - one lump or two?*" ...

Hmmm. I have the germ of an idea for a potentially lucrative business venture. Think of the stuff we often have to wade through whilst on a Group walk and whose residue we then have to scrape off our boots. It is plentiful, free and fragrant. There might be a profit to be made from it. Would anyone like to invest in my *Cowpat Coffee Company*?

"Try not to stoach... and watch out for that patch of gubber!"

A cursory interrogation of a well-known search engine reveals that until relatively recent times natives of Sussex spoke with a distinctive accent and used a rich local dialect derived from a variety of languages: Romano-British, Anglo Saxon, Norman French, mediaeval French and Scandinavian. Different variants were spoken in west, east and mid Sussex, whilst there were differences between Wealden and Downland populations; by repute the former had impenetrable accents. The dialect has mostly died out but a few words remain in common usage and occasionally the traditional Sussex accent may be heard.

Just as the Inuit have many words to describe the various types of snow with which they have to contend, so the Sussex folk of bygone days had an extensive vocabulary to describe a feature of their landscape that had a major effect on their ability to work the land. That feature is something familiar to those of us who venture into the Weald during the wet season. Folks it is mud and the locals used a range of nouns, verbs and adjectives for its many and glorious forms:



Clodgy	Muddy and wet
Gawm	Especially sticky, foul-smelling mud
Gubber	Black mud composed of rotting organic matter
Ike	A mess or area of mud
Pug	A kind of loam, particularly the sticky yellow Wealden clay
Slob/Slub	Thick mud
Slab	The thickest mud
Sleech	Mud or river sediment used for manure
Slough	A muddy hole
Slurry	Diluted mud, saturated with so much water that it cannot drain
Smeery	Wet and sticky surface mud
Stoach	To trample ground, like cattle
Stodge	Thick puddingy mud
Stug	Watery mud
Swank	A bog

Perhaps those who provide LDWA Sussex walk summaries for the half-yearly reviews will incorporate a few examples of the old dialect, thus to enrich future editions of this newsletter...

7. 'Your walk'

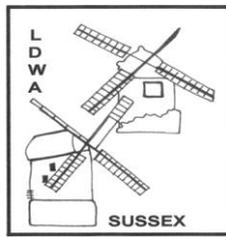
The Shetland Islands

If you ever have a chance to visit the Shetland Islands then take it. In order to enjoy them you have to have a car, because there is much ground to cover, many islands to visit and never enough time. When I visited I was lucky enough to have a brother working in the fish farm industry; he knew the right people and ensured that boats were available to ferry our small group to some of the more inaccessible islands. Walking was the way to see the spectacular scenery and prolific sea bird colonies. I cannot go into details of all the walks, but I would like to focus on one or two.

For the first, one has to travel by ferry from Lerwick to the Island of Bressay, drive across this island and then be ferried across in a dinghy to the Isle of Noss. Although not a large island circumnavigating it is most rewarding. The scenery is unbelievable with sea birds everywhere.

The second walk was round the Island of Foula. This is most definitely not on the tourist route! We got up at 4 am in order to be taken to this island on a creel boat, courtesy of a friend of my brother. The highest point on Foula is The Sneug (418m), but the island features one of the highest sheer cliffs in the British Isles, The Kame (376m). This is not for vertigo sufferers, but well worth the climb.

The final walk worthy of highlighting was on the island of Unst. This is the most northerly of the Shetland Islands and boasts the aptly named Muckle Flugga, the most northerly group of rocks in the British Isles. There is a walk to Herma Ness where one can see Muckle Flugga. Once again the bird life is incredible and it was while sitting among the puffins that I was inspired to write a book.



One is inspired to do all sorts of things while on walks. Anyway I saw this inspiration through to a conclusion and have written a book called *Peter the Puffin*. Although not mentioned in the book, Peter's adventures take place on the cliffs at Herma Ness. The book is suitable for children aged 6 to 9 and was published in the summer. My share of the proceeds goes to fund a young lad in Kenya who has just started at University¹.

I thoroughly recommend a visit to the most northerly corner of the United Kingdom. The Shetlanders have done very well for themselves through astute deals over the oil. They have their own flag and feel closer to the Scandinavians than to the Scots!

Anthony Mitchell

The Channel Islands Way

Where in the United Kingdom is there a hundred mile long distance walk that does not involve climbing a single stile? Why, on the Channel Islands! Trevor, Lisa and I spent 12 days completing the amazing Channel Islands Way, an adventure that involved ferries, aeroplanes and buses, and we enjoyed it so much.

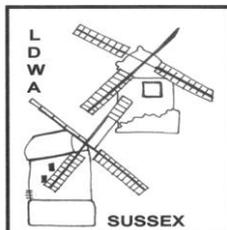
We flew to Guernsey and spent 6 days in a hotel at La Villette very convenient for accessing the coastal path. On the 1st day and thereafter we had no problem returning to the hotel or getting back to the coast thanks to the excellent bus service where every ride costs £1. The walk round Guernsey took 2 days and 2 half days. The South Coast is wonderful coastal walking on high cliffs with hidden bays and beaches and MANY steps. The North Coast is interesting, with fortifications dating from William the Conqueror's time through to Napoleonic times and on to German fortifications for the Second World War. However there are long beaches which meant we often had to walk along concrete surfaces, which was rather wearing on one's feet.

We interspersed our time on Guernsey with day trips to Sark and Herm. Sark is a delightful island with no cars, just bikes, horses and carts. It is 10½ miles round the island and so we had time for a lovely lunch plus a pint in what was called 'a tea room'. My appetite had been whetted by the TV programme *Island Parish* so I was pleased to discover they have at last got a new vicar and I visited the Anglican and Methodist churches.

Herm is quite different and only 4 miles round so that was a really leisurely day. Lisa and I even swam in the sea from Belvoir Beach. There is an interesting old settlement in the centre of the island with self-catering accommodation.... and a pub that we made good use of!

We then flew to Alderney on our own private plane..... well it felt like that because we were the only passengers! The small plane painted yellow with a red nose was G-JOEY, a Britten-Norman Trislander scheduled to be taken out of service in 2015; a Facebook campaign has been mounted in an attempt to prevent this. The flight was quite an experience as was Alderney Airport! They have no machines to pass the luggage through to check on contents, so on our return we were each taken into a cubicle to open our cases for an official to look through them... not an enviable task! Alderney is 11½ miles round and is pleasantly undulating rather than

¹ Editor's note: *Peter the Puffin* costs around £7 – for details see <https://wordery.com/peter-the-puffin-anthony-mitchell-9781910394113>



steep. It has one town called St. Anne that is cobbled and quaint and reminded me of Robin Hood's Bay. It has a harbour where we found a nice pub in what was once a warehouse. We stayed on the island overnight and had a delicious Indian meal in Nellie Grey's, an establishment named after a former inhabitant of Alderney.

We flew on to Jersey via a 'touch-down' at Guernsey and were taken to our hotel in Le Corbière which was right on the path but in the back of beyond. Luckily the buses were again excellent though they did cost £1.80 a ride this time. Jersey's coastline proved the most strenuous but it was interesting and picturesque almost all the way, again with MANY steps! We were able to avoid much of the walking on concrete, as the tide enabled us to walk on the beaches. The book said it was 38miles round, but everyone told us it was 48miles and certainly the mileage we walked was more akin to the latter figure. One day, walking from Govey to Grève de Lecq, I felt very sure that our 16miles was at least 20; with 2 miles to go and my feet aching, imagine the delight of coming across a pub at Devil's Hole. It took some persuasion to get Trevor to stop as it meant missing our bus but the pint put a spring into our step and there was always another bus to catch!

We were not so enthralled with our hotel in Jersey so looked for alternative places for dinner each evening... nothing beats fish and chips on a bench in St. Helier! One evening we stopped off in St. Aubin on our way back and went to a restaurant. Swapping shorts for trousers plus a dash of lipstick and a comb can soon transform one from a hiker to a dinner guest! I guess Trevor's favourite was when we finished walking early and caught the bus to the Smuggler's Inn that sold real ale and had a good menu. We even managed to call in the Portelet Inn on the way back to the bus.

On our last morning we visited the Jersey War Tunnels. They were SO interesting and we all wished we had visited them first because it would have helped us to better understand all the fortifications.

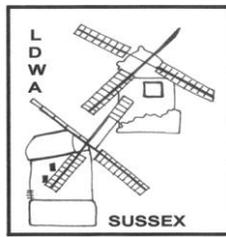
The Channel Island Way is certainly not a typical long distance walk because the logistics of walking it make for some easy days. The whole experience felt like a lovely holiday with 110miles of walking thrown in. I feel very lucky to have found two people to do it with me, as it was one of the challenges I set for my year of becoming 70.

Joan Wortley

Wessex Weekend Away, October 2014

I was privileged once more to join members of our neighbouring LDWA Wessex Group for their annual weekend away in October that this year was based at the HF Holidays House at Peveril of the Peak (named after Sir Walter Scott's novel) that is set in extensive grounds in the village of Thorpe, Dovedale.

At the end of September a recce crew from Wessex made the journey up from Hampshire and spent several days working on 7 routes to enjoy over the 4 days spanning the weekend of 18th and 19th October. On the Friday, Saturday and Sunday there would be a shorter and longer route ranging from 10.5miles to 14.5miles with a single and slightly shorter route on the Monday before everyone would depart for home.



After agonizing for some while I decided, on balance, not to rise at 4am on the Friday and drive the motorways to Derbyshire for either of the two walks that day. Instead, I agreed to pick up Ann from Hove station so we could take a leisurely drive up and arrive just in time for cream tea to be served at the House. It was not long before those who had made the early start joined us after the walk.

Keen and ready to go, it was a cloudy and breezy Saturday morning. I decided to opt for the longer walk that started from the Cromford canal wharf car park. This was approximately half an hour by car from the House. Twenty-two walkers left the car park and set off along the canal to High Peak junction. The route then followed the High Peak Trail uphill on the track bed of the long gone Cromford and High Peak Railway, through Middlepeak and Middleton Top to connect with the Limestone Way beyond the Harboro' Rocks. The scenery and terrain changed as the route progressed to Grangemill then, still on the Limestone Way, to Upper Town and Bonsal (the pub was closed despite the sign showing that we had arrived before closing time!) before looping round above Matlock to The Heights of Abraham with views across the valley to Riber Castle. We then descended to Cromford and the canal, initially through woodland, to enjoy an end-of-the-walk tea next to the car park.

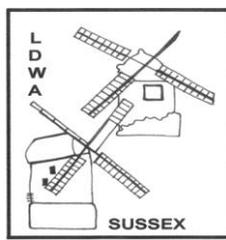
That evening, following the usual enjoyment of food and drink, LDWA member Patrick Flemming presented a DVD of his astonishing 'End-to-End' (John O'Groats to Lands End) journey by foot back in 2010. His route was a remarkable 1600 miles that he completed in 80 days having booked all the accommodation in advance. His route included the Three Peaks as well as the Coast-to-Coast Walk. Despite the route, the terrain and usual problems with some inclement weather he still managed to average 20miles a day with no rest days!

Feeling humbled, it was a brighter start to the Sunday. Dry but pretty breezy. This walk started from the Robin Hood car park, just off the A619 east of Baslow. It took around 40 minutes to reach there by car from the house. Again I opted for the longer route which went up on to Birchen Edge before descending gently across the moor to cross the A621 and then off onto Big Moor to a trig point and then onto White Edge. After catching sight of some rutting red deer we turned down and west towards the Grouse Inn (unfortunately we were there too early for the portals to be ajar). After crossing the main road we made our way towards Froggatt Edge overlooking the Derwent Valley. The path continued along Baslow Edge before dropping down into Baslow itself for a stop in either the pub or cafe. From Baslow we headed southwards into Chatsworth Park before continuing uphill into the woodland leading to the Hunting Tower. After that it was a straightforward path north and northeast onto Dobb Edge before descending to the Robin Hood car park. An excellent route.

Monday's route included The Roaches, a feature unfamiliar to me. However, I decided that having very much enjoyed the two walks I'd done, I would take another leisurely drive back to reflect on another great weekend away walking.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to organising, recceing, and leading walks with a special thank you to Michael Godfrey for all the hard work in putting the weekend together.

Trevor Beeston



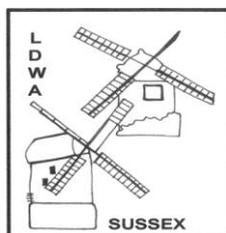
Coast-to-Coast Walk

Wainwright's famous long-distance route was established by the great man himself in 1972 and has since been hiked by thousands of walking enthusiasts, who must surely agree with Wainwright in his modest, understated way that 'surely there cannot be a finer itinerary for a long-distance walk'. In two weeks one passes through three National Parks from the rugged grandeur and romanticism of the Lake District, to the verdant valleys and rolling moorland of the Yorkshire Dales, to the largest expanse of heather moorland in the UK for the final few days, crossing the North York Moors until the North Sea and the smuggling hamlet of Robin Hoods Bay hoves into sight, marking the completion of the 190mile route.

I have been a long-distance walker for many years and being an exiled Scot living in the south of England, I tend to migrate northwards each summer for a taste of more rugged scenery and upland walking in the hills and moorland of northern England. I was familiar with much of the Coast-to-Coast route, but had never joined it all up. As Wainwright said in his introduction to the walk, "*One should always have a definite objective, in a walk as in life – it is so much more satisfying to reach a target by a personal effort than to wander aimlessly. An objective is an ambition, and life without ambition is well, aimless wandering.*" No more aimless wandering for me as I signed up with Sherpa Expeditions for the walk last August.

St Bees is a picturesque holiday village on the Cumbrian coast, normally reachable by train from Carlisle or Leeds, but not on a Sunday when trains go no further than Whitehaven. If time permits, a visit to the historic Priory church is recommended to pray for good weather, pleasant companionship and a blister-free experience in the days ahead. The Priory was founded by St Bega in the 7th century, Celtic saint and pioneer of extreme sports, as legend has it that she fled Ireland by crossing the Irish sea in a laundry basket before being washed up in St Bees. (And all of this to escape an arranged marriage!)

There were 12 of us signed up for the walk, 7 from Australia, my roommate Yvonne (spelt 'Aobhan') from Ireland, and the rest of us from England. Two of the Australians were young lads in their twenties who were travelling for a few months, Patrick being the son of Betty who was travelling with her friend Judy. The Coast-to-Coast is apparently very popular in Australia and to my surprise the majority of Sherpa Expedition clients come from Down Under. Most of us were middle aged, the oldest being Judy in her late sixties. Most were not long distance walkers and the level of fitness varied greatly within the group. The less experienced walkers were noticeable by their inappropriate kit, such as larger-than-life Terry from Australia whose only waterproof protection was a plastic cape, which nearly had him airborne Mary Poppins style when crossing windy summits in the Lake District. Mention must be made of our wonderful young leader Will Copestake, who looked about 14 years of age but was actually in his early 20s and already established as one of life's true adventurers. He had spent the previous winter kayaking solo around Scotland, climbing every Munro in his spare time in sub-arctic temperatures, he has already written one book about another adventure in Iceland during his student days, and he is currently saving up to cycle solo around the world. A name to watch out for in the future! Will turned out to be a perfect leader - knowledgeable about geology, botany, wildlife and all aspects of the route, pleasant and sociable even when crossing bogs in wind and rain with zero visibility, and generally exuding a calm confidence that gave us the false assurance that all would be well if we fell off Striding Edge or became submerged up to our necks in a peat bog (he did have to deal with a client suffering a heart attack on the previous expedition!).

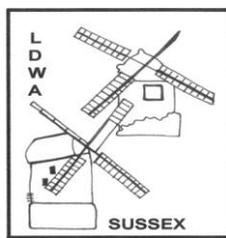


The route of the Coast-to-Coast divides neatly into 3 sections, the first being the drama and excitement of the Lake District National Park. The first few miles involves climbing St Bees Head above the village and walking on top of the cliffs before turning inland just before Whitehaven. My diary records rugged sandstone cliffs populated by hosts of noisy gulls and cormorants and a clear, breezy day with sweeping views south to Sellafield, north to the Mull of Galloway and the Isle of Man to the west. As one turns inland and climbs the first hill called Dent, Wainwright aptly comments that *"it is the sudden revelation of the Lakeland fells that rivets the attention"*, fuelling eager anticipation of the walk ahead. The steepest descent of the whole route took us down to a small beck and the gradual descent into Ennerdale Bridge, day one accomplished. This was followed by a tranquil overnight stay in the homely Fox and Hounds Hotel, situated in what must be one of the most peaceful corners of the Lake District.

The highlight of the second day was reaching the isolated Black Sail Youth Hostel, originally a shepherd's bothy, situated in a high, glaciated valley surrounded by some of the most impressive peaks of the Lake District – Pillar, Great Gable, High Crag and Haystacks. The landscape is noticeable for its strange bumps and humps, the correct geological terminology for which (drumlins) was provided by Will. The sunny weather held and we were rewarded with amazing views as we climbed the high pass out of the valley, with Ennerdale Lake, Buttermere and Crummock Water far below and framed by the sea in the far distance, while ahead lay the Honister Pass and the famous slate quarry. Our first real soaking was experienced in the last hour as we descended into Borrowdale, passing through picturesque Seatoller and following the swollen river to Seathwaite. One of the trip's highlights was staying in Knott's View, a wonderfully quaint B & B of great antiquity, which had been a monastic farm in Tudor days, but disappointingly no visits by hooded figures in the night!

Drama ensued the next day as torrential overnight rain had changed small streams spilling over the footpath into rushing torrents, submerging the stepping stones and making any such crossing slippery and hazardous. After Yvonne slipped and fell in the first of such torrents, Will made us cross in groups of three by linking arms around shoulders. We were soon wet through and almost relieved to reach the boggy ground at the top of the pass. What promised to be a thoroughly wet and miserable day had now defied the predictions as so often happens in the Lake District, and we enjoyed clear views of Scafell Pike in bright sunshine before beginning our slow descent to Grasmere. We accomplished the next stage (Grasmere to Patterdale) on a wonderfully clear, warm and sunny day, the highlight being a high ridge walk from Grisedale Tarn along St. Sunday Crag (2756 feet) with dazzling views of Helvellyn and Striding edge across the valley, before descending fairly steeply to Patterdale and Ullswater. This was our last day in the Lake District and the hard terrain had taken its toll on some of my travelling companions. Judy, the oldest member of the group, was winning the prize for the most spectacular blisters, closely followed by Terry, who was generally in poor shape (although he had now purchased a proper waterproof jacket in Grasmere). Patrick, one of the young Australian lads developed a painful knee injury, while Betty (his mother) was going slower and slower. At least our group showed grit and determination and no-one wanted to drop out (unlike a very overweight young American woman in Will's previous group who had declared a medical emergency after developing blisters on day one, got herself to A & E in Carlisle only to be told to 'man up' and had subsequently spent most of the trip travelling in the luggage van, only reuniting with the group each evening!)

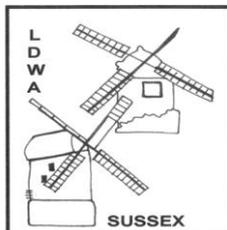
It was a long day's walking from Patterdale to Shap, but dramatic in its own right with a high (and very windy!) ridge walk towards Kidsty Pike, incorporating the famous High Street, before descending to Haweswater with its submerged village of Mardale, sadly mourned by Wainwright who remembers Mardale as a charming and secluded valley. (The village was



flooded when the lake was turned into a reservoir). From here it still seemed a long trek to Shap where we arrived like drowned rats, having got caught in a drenching thunderstorm in Shap Abbey (a picturesque ruin, but not one building with a roof to afford shelter to suffering Coast-to-Coasters!). Shap must be the longest and most unappealing village in the north of England and sadly our hotel was at the wrong end of the village. (However, the King's Arms Hotel offered great hospitality and the cheapest dinner en-route, so all was soon forgiven after a hot shower!) The next day was a transition from the Lakes in Cumbria to Kirkby Stephen in Yorkshire on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales, a 20-mile leg-stretcher across a high limestone plateau, largely open moorland and fields with stunning views back towards the Cumbrian fells and eastwards to the Howgill fells and Pennines. It was one of those energisingly clear days where it simply feels good to be alive and the terrain enabled a faster walking pace (at least for those like myself thankfully free of blisters or other ailments) despite the distance. A very pleasant overnight stay in the clean, comfortable and welcoming Jolly Farmers B & B in Kirkby Stephen gave us energy to cross the mother-of-all-bogs the next day. This involved climbing up to a man-made formation called the Nine Standards, conical shaped structures on high, bleak moorland whose origin is unknown. By this time the rain and mist had set in with a vengeance as we squelched our way onwards, floundering about in a completely desolate landscape where I thanked God that Will could lead us across this no-man's land without serious mishap, before at last descending towards Keld at the head of Swaledale, our introduction to the Yorkshire Dales. At the head of the valley, just after descending from the high and boggy moorland, we encountered Ravenseat Farm, now made famous by both Julia Bradbury's programme on the Coast-to-Coast and more recently by the recent ITV series on the Dales. We were only too glad to be lured in to the midge-infested barn to be offered tea and scones, served by the eldest daughter of Amanda Owen, who has now immortalised herself by writing her best-selling autobiography 'The Yorkshire Shepherdess'. (A very good read and Amanda is as likeable in the book as she appeared in real life. The scones were delicious too.)

I love the Dales – all those wonderful Norse names like Thwaite and Arkengarthdale, all those fantastic, solid stone barns dotting the landscape, the tapestry of dry stone walls enclosing lush fields filled with wild flowers in the early summer, the brimming rivers meandering in the valleys with ancient stone bridges, while higher up the bleak moorland landscape is a stark contrast, heavily mined for lead in the 18th and 19th centuries and still scarred with its relics of human industry. Swaledale is possibly the best dale of all and the Coast-to-Coast goes from one end to the other. We took the lower route following the Swale, very swollen and fast-moving after recent heavy rain, and stayed overnight in Reeth, the largest village at the eastern end of Swaledale. Poor Terry was in a very bad way by the time we reached Reeth and sought medical advice for his infected blisters and very swollen feet. (The ex-army doctor recommended wrapping feet in duct tape to avoid blisters, a useful tip for the future, but a bit late for Terry, who subsequently spent the next 2 days with the luggage van).

A short but delightfully gentle and pretty walk the next day took us to the handsome market town of Richmond on the river Swale, dominated by its ancient castle. This was one of the easiest days of the whole route, while the subsequent one proved to be the longest. The next leg is about 21 miles of flat, boring landscape across fields and along small roads, a tedious but unavoidable section to link the Dales with the Moors, the lowest point of the route in both senses of the word. (Wainwright was scathing about this section!) We stayed in the attractive village of Osmotherley, just off the official route, which involved the only climb of the day to reach.



Some people might not rate the 2 days walking across the North York Moors as a highlight, and indeed this landscape can be very bleak in bad weather or at certain times of the year. However, this was mid-August and the heather was out in full bloom, looking and smelling quite spectacular. If you haven't seen a sea of purple heather stretching to the horizon and been intoxicated by the sweet perfume, then get yourself to the North York Moors in August. I was in heaven for these two days. The villages in North Yorkshire can also be attractive and we stayed in Grosmont, a magnet for railway enthusiasts as its main source of income is centred on the North York Moors steam railway. The ITV series Heartland was filmed nearby.

The final day's walking did not disappoint – last taste of the heather clad moors, clear views of Whitby Abbey and the promised coast coming ever nearer, the charming village of Littlebeck described by Wainwright as 'a miniature Arcadia embowered in trees', a truly magical walk in ancient woodland leading to the splendid Falling Foss waterfall with open air café offering mouth-watering scones and cakes, and finally the last couple of miles of cliff walking until the moment of euphoria when Robins Hood Bay is sighted nestling in an inlet just round Ness Point. The journey is not complete until performing the ritual of throwing the pebble taken from the beach at St Bees into the sea at Robin Hood's Bay.

Thank you Wainwright and Sherpa Expeditions for a wonderful fortnight's walking! Well done to all those in my group who persevered with blisters, sprains and strains to throw their pebbles in the North Sea in Robins Hood Bay. As a long distance walker, you shouldn't have any difficulty with the distances and terrain, so there's a wonderful opportunity waiting for all you aimless wanderers if you haven't already done the Coast-to-Coast.

Gillian Aitken

Le Jog

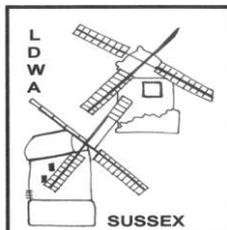
The latest from our intrepid Webmaster, who is walking the 'End-to-End' (Lands End to John O'Groats) in sequential 'easy' stages.

Back in June when I was attempting to walk from Hebden Bridge to Glasgow, I had to do some of the sections by rail and finally give up at Gretna Green due to problems with my knees. So at the end of September, having recovered, I went back to make use of the Settle to Carlisle railway to help fill in several gaps. I decided to stay at the Station Inn, which is only 100 yards from Ribbleshead railway station, and booked in for four nights.

I arrived at the Station Inn around midday on Friday, parked my bags in my room and set off to Dent. This section goes right past the magnificent Ribbleshead viaduct and then follows the line before heading over the hills to Dent valley. In the evening I took the train south to Ribbleshead.

Saturday saw me going northwards again – by rail to Appleby for the 17 mile section to Langwathby. The good weather of Friday had continued and the walking was fairly easy. Then it was train again back to Ribbleshead and the Station Inn.

I returned by rail to Langwathby on Sunday and walked to Armthwaite. Afterwards I had time to spare to go into the restored station signal box to talk to the volunteer signaller on duty.



Monday was the last walking day and this time my morning train journey was southwards to Settle, from where I walked the 15miles back to the Station Inn via Horton in Ribblesdale.

So now I can say I have walked the whole of England from Lands End to Gretna Green. My plan for 2015 is to complete the Gretna Green to Glasgow section in June, then walk the West Highland Way to Fort William in September.

Walking the Settle to Carlisle Way

This walk of 97miles would make a good week's walking and because of the railway could be done from a base camp, so kit would not have to be carried. The views are great and the walking not too difficult, but a close eye has to be kept eye on the map to avoid going astray because there are many intersecting paths; the route links together bits of other long distance routes – Pennine Way, Pennine Bridle Way, Ribble Way - with other paths beside the rivers. First of all get hold of a copy of the Rucksack Readers booklet and a Harveys map of the route.

In some places the railway station is a long way from the towns – Kirkby Stephen is a good example – but in most places it is convenient for the walk. With regard to accommodation:

- Settle. Plenty available and the station is in the town.
- Horton-in-Ribblesdale. In June I stayed at the Crown Inn (£82), ½mile from the station.
- Ribbleshead. The Station Inn (£40-60) is in the middle of nowhere but just100 yards from the station. The food is brilliant.
- Armathwaite. I stayed in June at the Fox and Pheasant Inn (£70), 1mile from the station.
- Carlisle. Plenty available; I stayed at Cornerways B&B (£55), 1mile from the station.

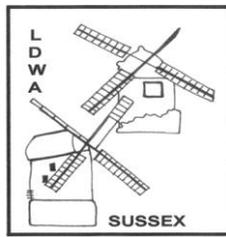
When using the railway for local journeys tickets are bought on the train since there are no ticket offices except at Settle and Carlisle. With my Senior Railcard I was paying £3-£6 per trip.

Good walking. Good scenery. Let the train take the strain. Have fun.

David Hodge

8. Shadows of Sussex past: a Downland walk

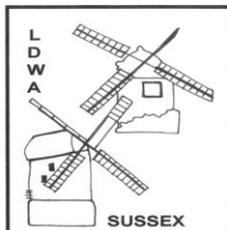
The early hunter-gatherer inhabitants of what was not yet an island arrived from the continent via a land bridge now long submerged beneath the shallow waters of the North Sea. They were nomadic and save for enigmatic stone artefacts and cave art they left little trace of their presence. However those who followed them settled on the land and left their mark in the form of features in the landscape, place names, local dialect and customs. One of the fascinations of studying maps of our area and of looking around when out and about is that one can readily identify traces of those long-gone people. The first of the Sussex Group walks summarised in the half-yearly review provided a perfect opportunity for a walk through history.



The people

The settlers came in successive phases:

- Neolithic, ca. 4000 – 2500BC. The first immigrants to establish stable communities, the 'New Stone Age' farmers introduced advanced agricultural techniques, cleared the more easily worked land, planted crops of wheat and barley and kept herds of domesticated animals. Their flint arrowheads, knives and the like are often found on chalk high ground on which their characteristic enclosures and 'long barrows' are visible from afar, whilst their most enduring legacy is a range of monumental henges, stone circles and temples of which Stonehenge is perhaps the most well known.
- Bronze Age, ca. 2500 – 600BC. Newcomers often referred to as 'Beaker People' because of the distinctive pottery vessels found in their 'round barrow' burial mounds, they were farmers and the first skilled metal smiths in the island. Initially working in copper and gold, then later in bronze, their era was one of trading since the ores necessary to make the bronze weapons and implements that revolutionised prehistoric life came from far and wide, some from the island and others from the continent.
- Iron Age, ca. 600 – 100BC. A multitude of loosely connected and warring tribes of people who in more recent times have been referred to as 'Celts', and who brought with them the technology to produce and work the iron that rendered bronze obsolete. This process was relatively cheap and the raw materials widely available, so the earlier trading society changed rapidly. Strategically sited massive Iron Age hill forts are a feature of the English uplands and traces of the Celtic tongue may be discerned in local place names.
- Roman, AD43 – ca. 400. A martial, disciplined and well organised administration, the Romans quickly stamped their authority over the Celtic tribes via a 'divide and conquer' strategy; they named their new province to the south of Hadrian's Wall 'Britannica', perhaps after the Brython tribe. The legions stationed here were manned by soldiers from all over the Roman Empire and there was much inter-marriage with the native Celts. This era witnessed the beginning of recorded history, the establishment of cities and the creation of an efficient integrated road system.
- Angle, Saxon and Jute, 5th – 10th century. Successive waves of Germanic immigrants from tribes in the Rhineland and the Low Countries capitalised on the withdrawal of the Roman legions, crossed to the island, shunned the cities and settled on good farming land wherever they could find it. The turbulence of the times as society collapsed, inter-tribal warfare resumed and the incomer Anglo Saxons fought for land is the stuff of 'Dark Age' Arthurian heroic legend. Strong and prosperous Anglo Saxon kingdoms gradually formed of which that of Wessex, the land of the West Saxons, eventually gained supremacy and laid the foundations for an 'English' nation.
- Scandinavian, ca. 800 -1066. The Vikings, 'people of the *viks*' (Old Norse for creeks), mounted their campaigns from homelands in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland and from newly gained territories such as the Orkneys and Ireland. Initially concerned with plunder and extortion, increasingly they attempted invasion and conquest. Their main impact was felt in the north of the country but they came close to conquering the whole of Anglo Saxon England, eventually being contained within the Danelaw by the West Saxon king Alfred ('the Great') then defeated by his successors Athelstan and Harold Godwinson. Harold's victory was in September 1066 at Stamford Bridge a few miles east of York, the former Viking capital of the Danelaw. Three days later Duke William and his forces landed near Pevensey and Harold hurried south.
- Norman, 1066 – 13th century. The Normans were descended from Vikings who around the year 900 had established themselves in Normandy ('the land of the north men').



After his army had defeated the Anglo Saxon *fyrð* and slain Harold on Senlac Hill, William ensured the security of his new realm by granting land to each of his small band of trusted nobles, requiring them to build a castle and control the local area. The earliest of these 'castleries' were in Sussex – the 'raperies' of William's two half-brothers and two of his trusted followers. A Norman French aristocracy replaced and dispossessed the former Anglo Saxon one and a new feudalism was imposed. Yet life for the common people continued much as hitherto and beneath the veneer of Norman control a predominantly Anglo Saxon England endured.

The terrain

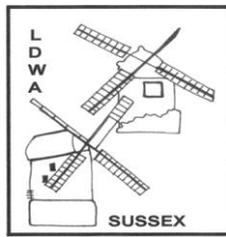
Before the arrival of the South Saxons, the people who gave their name to the county, most settlements in Sussex were on the easily worked coastal plain, the high ground close inland (the Downs, a name derived from the Saxon for 'hill') and the narrow fertile greensand strip running along its landward slope. Further inland the dense woodland named *Andredesweald* by the Saxons ('the wood of *Andereida*', Roman Pevensy) that stretched from the Medway to Hampshire, much of it on cold wet clay, had been too much of a challenge for the earlier farmers and their implements. It was uninhabited save for a few small and isolated settlements, many associated with Celtic and Roman iron workings; its name lives on as The Weald and in some respects it has retained its character.

The walk

The 20th July 'Many views of Cuckmere' outing took members of the Sussex Group on to and around a section of the Downs and started from a car park close to a cliff edge area of low banks and shallow ditches. These are the scant remains of a large Romano-British settlement that has almost disappeared as a consequence of nearly two millennia of coastal erosion and that was associated with a port somewhere close to the bridge at Exceat on which the group crossed the Cuckmere river. Exceat's place name might be derived from the Saxon 'place of the *Aese*' (the early kings of Kent) and although now little more than a pub and three or four buildings, the port remained a busy trading centre after the departure of the Romans until eventually succumbing to French raids and the Black Death 900 years later.

- A ten-minute walk over the hill northwards from Exceat is another historical maritime site: Westdean, now a sleepy landlocked hamlet but in the 9th century a strategically important waterside settlement known as *Eorlscourt* and associated with a naval base where King Alfred maintained a fleet to help defend against coastal incursions by the Vikings. A few scattered remains of what some historians believe was once a royal palace are visible in the grounds of some of the handsome flint houses.
- Just to the north of Westdean is Charleston Manor, recorded in the 1068 Domesday Book as *Cerlestone*; a name perhaps derived from Saxon for 'place of the peasants' (*ceorl*, the lowest rank of freemen in Anglo Saxon times; *tun*, an enclosed farm or settlement). The oldest portion of the house was built around 1080 by the first king in the Norman line – William ('the Conqueror') – for his cupbearer. Although showing little mercy to the conquered English, William was generous to his inner circle and among the lands given to one of his half brothers was the port of Exceat.

The morning coffee stop was near Friston, at some stage in the Saxon period the *tun* of someone whose name has been corrupted over the centuries to 'Fris'. This was the first of several places with Saxon patronymic names encountered during the day: in turn Jevington, Folkington, Wilmington and Alfriston.



The characteristic long barrows of a Neolithic settlement could be seen to the northeast atop Combe Hill during the descent along a mediaeval drove road towards Jevington, once the home of 'Jev'. The village was entered via the grounds of its handsome 11th century church whose structure includes re-used Roman bricks.

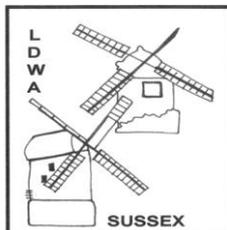
- During the few generations they spent in Normandy the descendents of the early 10th century Viking settlers interbred with the locals, developed a Norman French language, abandoned their pagan roots and embraced Christianity. Once established in their new English domain they proved enthusiastic builders of churches, systematically demolishing the majority of Saxon wooden ones and replacing them with substantial and handsome stone structures. This process was at least in part intended to demonstrate the wealth and power of the new regime, thus to help demoralise and subjugate the defeated majority population. Often a new church would be constructed by a team of journeymen masons who would eat, drink and be accommodated in a nearby building, sometimes one erected by themselves that after their departure continued to provide sustenance. Hence in many English villages ancient church and inn are in close proximity.

Half an hour after leaving Jevington the group passed the 13th century church on the edge of Folkington, a village recorded as *Fochintone* in the Domesday Book and 400 years later a producer of teasels used to 'tease' wool farmed on the Downs for the broadcloth industry. A few minutes later down the hill in the middle distance could be seen the small village of Wilmington, a settlement that developed around a Norman priory.

- On the coat tails of the new Norman aristocracy, many of whom would no doubt have experienced guilt at the way in which they had dispossessed and repressed the local population, came the monks who benefited from the patronage of the powerful and wealthy. In exchange for land and money the inmates of the monastic houses undertook to pray for the souls of their benefactors, so to ease their way to heaven.

The route passed below the Long Man, a stylised figure cut into the chalk of Windover Hill and whose origins are unclear: a prehistoric fertility symbol, an Anglo-Saxon warrior, the work of an artistic monk from the priory, or an 18th century folly? The group descended from Windover along the line of a Romano-Celtic track way towards the Cuckmere river, leaving behind atop the hill several Bronze Age round barrows and the remains of ancient flint mines. Ahead in the distance on the ridge of the western Downs strategically positioned Neolithic long barrows could be seen. Just over the hill to the left were the lynchets (earthen banks that built up on the downhill boundaries of ploughed strips) of a Celtic field system. Below to the right on the east bank of the Cuckmere at The Rookery were the fragmentary remains of a Saxon *hythe* (river port) with traces of Burlough Castle, a 12th century Norman fortification, a few hundred yards further north.

Lunch was taken at Alfriston, recorded as *Aelfrictun* in Saxon times and *Elfricesh-tun* in the Domesday Book of 1086. The Cuckmere was then a broad navigable estuary and Saxon Alfriston was a thriving commercial centre. In more recent times the village was a haven for a notorious gang of smugglers; a Channel 5 archaeological dig featured *Ye Olde Smugglers Inne*, inside which evidence of smuggling and animal butchery was unearthed whilst in the land at its rear indications of Neolithic activity were found. Another of the local watering holes, the Star Inn, was built as a religious hostel in 1345 to accommodate monks and pilgrims en route from Battle Abbey (constructed on the instruction of William, with its High Altar on the spot where Harold was slain) to the shrine of St Richard (patron saint of Sussex) at Chichester Cathedral.



From Alfriston the group turned southwards towards Cradle Hill and a junction with The Comp, a spur from one of the prehistoric trackways that crisscross the south and southwest of the country. These vital communication arteries linked the ports of the Irish Sea with those on the south and east coasts and wherever possible followed ridges on high ground; this was to avoid the hard going of the wooded and waterlogged lowlands and the dangers that lurked within them. So the final stage of the return to the car park at Hill Barn was walked in the footsteps of copper and tin traders, legionaries, pilgrims and the like.

Walking with the Sussex Group is so complicated.... so much to see and think about whilst at the same time trying to keep up with one's companions and, occasionally, to hold a conversation with them...

David Weatherley

Thank you to each of those who have provided material for this newsletter. Contributions suitable for inclusion in the next (July 2015) edition would be most welcome.