

# Long Distance Walkers' Association

## SUSSEX GROUP

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



**NEWSLETTER**

**January 2016**

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### **1. Chairman's Chat**

On one hand it could be said that 2015 was 'business as usual' - which indeed it was. On the other hand, I felt that the Group gathered some positive momentum last year.

For the first time in a number of years, and certainly since I've been involved with the Group, a weekend away took place. Whilst there were only half a dozen of us to enjoy the walking delights of the Isle of Wight, it did show that we could branch out and provide members with some alternative areas to explore. The enthusiasm shown by those that participated was such that the Committee decided to organise another short trip away in 2016. Dorset is planned this time and we hope that this will attract further interest - preliminary information may be found in Section 7 of this newsletter.

As many of you will know, the Group organises the LDWA South Downs Marathon each year and the LDWA Sussex Stride every three years. Since many groups hold two or more Challenge events every year, the Committee gave consideration to organising an additional event so that we could offer a minimum of two for each calendar year. Work started at exploring options and routes for possible inclusion in the 2017 programme.

Returning to the 2015 LDWA South Downs Marathon, which took place on an extremely windy day at the end of March. For the first time since this particular event has been held from East Dean, the 150 entry limit was reached. We could not be surprised however that we had a number of no-shows because of the awful weather forecast. I would like to thank all those that helped organise the event and also those that had to batten down the hatches on the checkpoints. I would also like to thank those who travelled to Dover to provide a checkpoint on the LDWA White Cliffs Challenge organised by our Kent Group neighbours.

The Group's walks programme attracted interest similar to the previous year. It was good see a number of new faces and we hope that they will continue to support our walks in the future. We continued to have just a small core group of members that came out regularly so, as with previous years, the numbers were often swelled by those that could simply make it on the day.

In 2014 we had high hopes for the two walks that we led for the Sussex Walking Festival but were disappointed by the large number of no-shows, especially for the 'Wealden Circular', so we agreed to provide just one walk for the 2015 Festival. Despite the on-line entry arrangements being improved and the forecast for a largely sunny day only 11 out of 20 who had booked turned up on the day. However, on a positive note I do know of at least three of the participants who have shown further interest in the LDWA. The Committee will again review how to make sure the LDWA benefits from participation in future such walking festivals.

I would like to thank all of those who devised, led and participated in Group walks. We still 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 (our Constitution says we still have two places left!). This will help ensure that the Group continues to thrive.

*Trevor Beeston, Chairman*

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## 2. Group News

### LDWA Sussex Committee, January 2016

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

*There still remain vacancies on the Committee. Please contact either the Chairman or the Secretary if you are interested in helping your local Group.*

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### Committee meetings

During the six months since publication of the previous newsletter there have been Committee meetings on 23rd October 2015 and 21st January 2016, both held at The Trevor Arms, Glynde.

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### AGM, Saturday 27th February 2016

This year we are planning to hold the AGM at The Sussex Ox, Milton Street, near Alfriston, and to combine it with a social event and a short walk. We will park at the pub, have a morning walk, then return for a social gathering, food and the AGM. ***Please support your Group if you are able to do so; if you plan to attend please register your interest via the [website](#).***

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### Website

The online payment system for the 2016 South Downs Marathon has been activated and 64 entrants had registered at 21st January. Using this system cuts down on the manual paperwork and we will be using it for the Sussex Stride in September. If you are interested in the entries then go to the Events page and click on 'List of Entrants'.

We get on average 20 people a day visiting the website with the 'Walking Program' and 'Events' pages the most popular. If you have any suggestions for improvement to the website please feel free to contact me, just go to the 'Committee' page and click on the 'Webmaster' contact link. The 'Committee' page is where you can contact any member of the Committee by email, if you have a query.

*David Hodge, Webmaster*

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### 3. Challenge Events

#### Forthcoming Challenge Events.

##### **LDWA South Downs Marathon      Sun 15th May 2016.**

Based at East Dean, the circular route via Norton, Glynde and Litlington now covers 28miles and is considered by some to be one of the best Challenge events in the LDWA cornucopia. Full details can be found in the 'Events' section of the Group [website](#).

##### **Sussex Stride      Sat/Sun 24th/25th September 2016**

Based at Longhill School near Rottingdean, this event is the third component of the KSS Triple Challenge. The 51mile route explores The Downs via Lewes, Glynde, Alfriston, East Dean, Litlington and Bishopstone. Full details will soon be available in the 'Events' section of the Group website.

##### **Helpers Needed!**

Although the event booking system is now on-line and the entrants are electronically tracked along the route, helpers are still needed to marshal the checkpoints, work in the kitchens and generally look after the entrants. To find out more about what's involved please contact me via 01273 772076 or [chrisbainesholmes@btinternet.com](mailto:chrisbainesholmes@btinternet.com).

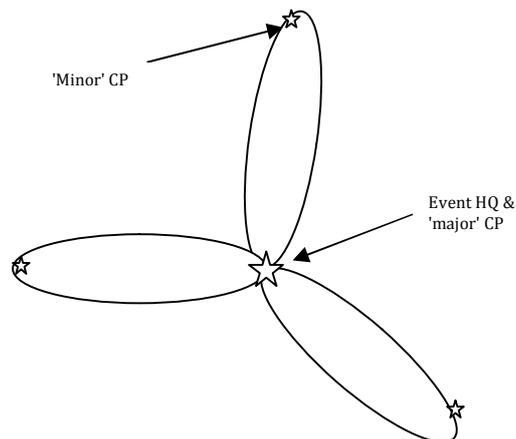
*Chris Baines-Holmes, Challenge Events Organiser*

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#### A New Sussex Group Challenge Event?

The Committee is considering introducing into the LDWA calendar an additional Challenge event to be held 2 years in every 3, i.e. each year except those in which the Sussex Stride is held. The objective is an event that offers entrants a selection of distances up to ca. 30 miles, encompasses a variety of Sussex scenery, and requires only a modest level of checkpoint (CP) support.

We are assessing a format in which each of three loops of approximately 10miles departs from and returns to a central location, thus providing routes of 10, 20 and 30miles. The central location serves the dual function of Event HQ and 'major' CP. Additional 'minor' CPs, offering only fluid and basic snacks, are sited approximately mid-way along each of the loops and, depending on event timing, can be supported by one or two vehicle-borne teams of two people.



The Committee has decided to proceed with plans to have an event based on Forest Row included in the

LDWA programme for 2017, subject to confirmation of feasibility. Much work remains to be done to finalise routes, write and test route descriptions, identify parking sites and so on. In principle in future years the 3-loop format could be based on other locations to offer different types of Sussex scenery. A name has yet to be chosen for the new event; 'Sussex Sampler' and 'Sussex Spokes' spring to mind but you might be able to suggest something better?

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## 4. Sussex Group Walks

### Walks Programme – 2015

Date	Walk	Start	Miles	No.
2015				
26/07	<i>A Fuller Follies variation</i>	<i>Burwash</i>	20	9
08/08	<i>Looping around The Downs</i>	<i>The Trundle</i>	20	6
22/08	<i>Ashdown Forest perambulation Part 2</i>	<i>Visitor Centre</i>	21	13
05/09	<i>Jerome's annual appearance</i>	<i>Burton Mill</i>	20	9
20/09	<i>Many views of Cuckmere</i>	<i>South Hill Barn</i>	20	14
03/10	<i>Wealden circular*</i>	<i>Burwash</i>	20	13
24/10	<i>A Kentish miscellany</i>	<i>Ashurst</i>	21	14
07/11	<i>A loop from Lancing</i>	<i>Lancing Ring</i>	16	12
21/11	<i>The Findon flyer</i>	<i>Findon</i>	15	13
06/12	<i>Christmas walk &amp; lunch</i>	<i>Alfriston</i>		9
19/12	<i>Hassocks humbug</i>	<i>Hassocks</i>	12	7
2016				
03/01	<i>First of the year</i>	<i>Firle</i>	12	5
30/01	<i>The great parks of London - revisited**</i>	<i>Regent's Park tube</i>	10	
13/02	<i>Wander from Washington</i>	<i>Washington SDW CP</i>	19	
27/02	<i>Walk and AGM</i>	<i>Milton Street</i>		
13/03	<i>Maresfield meander</i>	<i>Maresfield</i>	19	
26/03	<i>Round Rotherfield &amp; criss-crossing the Cuckoo Line</i>	<i>Rotherfield</i>	19	
10/04	<i>Meander to Chiddingly</i>	<i>Abbot's Wood CP</i>	19	
23/04	<i>Jerome's Chailey tour appearance</i>	<i>Scaynes Hill</i>	20	

*\*Organised by the Sussex Group for the Eastbourne & Wealden Walking Festival*

*\*\* Date changed from that in Strider*

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### Winter 2016 Half-Yearly Review

#### **Sunday 26th July 2015 - A Fuller Follies variation**

At the end of July you can just about guarantee that the weather will be hot, sunny and dry – can't you?! As it happened the rain started at 9am and after 20 miles it was still raining. It's not the first time we have started a walk from the car park in the centre of Burwash by the Bear Inn and have been thoroughly soaked by the end. Nevertheless there was no disquiet and the nine that had dismissed the weather forecast and went for it, enjoyed the challenge. Thanks to Jane for the leading and organising this walk and especially for a much needed stop at The Swan Inn, Dallington!

#### **Saturday 8th August 2015 - Looping around The Downs**

With Ann suffering an injury, it was with big thanks to David H for stepping in to lead this one, particularly as he lives in Hastings and the walk started near Goodwood. It was also a very hot day. Fortunately much of the walk was in woods so that gave some shelter. The pub at Stoughton quenched the thirst before a fairly straight route back.

### **Saturday 22nd August 2015 - Ashdown Forest Perambulation Pt. 2**

This was the second of two walks around Ashdown Forest that Manfred kindly agreed to put together, the first being back in May. A healthy thirteen enthusiasts started out this time from the Ashdown Forest Centre Car Park. Features of this highly attractive route featured the Weir Wood Reservoir, Chelwood Gate and the Nutley windmill. The Nutley Arms provided the welcome lunch stop.

### **Saturday 5th September - Jerome's annual appearance**

A group of 9 (it would have been 10 but one member was a few minutes late and we later met him on the hills) had an enjoyable hilly 19mile walk. A rather overcast day with no sign of sun and rather cool. From Burton mill pond, a circuitous morning, enlivened by a spectacular forward tumble roll from the leader, took us south and up to Bignor hill followed by the undulations of the Barlavington ridge to reach Duncton for lunch. The afternoon took us on another loop to the west; first a stiff climb up to Graffham Down and then a steep descent to the village. The final easy section across vast commons with much evidence of heather was very pleasant.

### **Sunday 20th September - Many views of Cuckmere**

Fourteen walkers certainly had 'many views' today. Perfect weather. The route changed slightly to avoid a muddy lane to Folkington, but the route over the top of the Long Man provided a splendid vista. Lunch in Alfriston at 1pm was followed by a climb out of the village and onto the relatively new attraction of the Rathfinny vineyard, stopping at the Flint Barns tea van for a cup of tea. Then up and on to High and Over for more great views of the spectacular Cuckmere Valley.

### **Saturday 3rd October - Wealden circular**

Our group of 13 included just 11 of the 20 who had booked via the Wealden Festival website. We set out northwards from Burwash in very misty conditions to cross the Rother at Wreckery Bridge, then continued to Witherenden Farm, Newbridge Wood, Bivelham Forge Farm and Batts Wood where a short drinks break was taken. Later the route crossed Wadhurst Deer Park, where we passed close to a herd of does being very closely and jealously guarded by a large stag, then onwards to Mayfield via Combe Wood and Sharnden Old Manor Farm. All were in good shape and the mist had dispersed, so those who did not lunch at the Horse and Groom were able to enjoy a picnic in the recreation ground. The return route took us past the farms of Bungehurst, Little Pigstrod and Froghole, then through woods in undulating countryside to Winters Farm and Mottynsden Manor House. The weather was now good and the views very scenic. This was a successful Festival walk; the group dynamics were good, each newcomer arrived back at Burwash happy and in fine fettle, and some declared an interest in future LDWA outings.

### **Saturday 24th October - A Kent miscellany**

Fourteen started out from Ashurst (Kent) railway station on an overcast but dry day. The route took us out along the Sussex Border Path to pick up the Wealdway to Stone Cross. As the title suggested much of this walk took us exploring over the border into Kent through Speldhurst to Bidborough Ridge, Lower Haysden, Haysden Water and then Penshurst for lunch which was well deserved after around 14 miles. Given the time a short section had to be missed to make sure that we were back at the station in time for those that had come by train. Many thanks to Tony for leading his first Group walk..

### **Saturday 7th November - A loop from Lancing**

Twelve gathered at North Lancing for this 16mile hike. Spirits were high despite the dismal weather and it was good to have some new faces amongst the group. Interesting that only two men braved the elements!! We walked through Old Shoreham and were all touched by the displays of ribbons on the bridge in memory of the eleven men who died in the Shoreham air crash. It was a treat on such a day to find a farm shop open for

coffee at Mile Oak Farm. We continued up the Sussex Border Path and over to The Shepherd and Dog at Fulking for lunch. The room where we ate was interesting .... a lovely wood burner one end and open to the elements at the other, but at least we did not have to take off our boots! We climbed back up to the South Downs Way and were confronted by many policemen and many cars. Apparently the cars contained Hunt saboteurs so we were glad we had passed them by the time the Hunt rode by with a wonderful pack of hounds. We battled on through very strong winds and rain and a couple of ladies did elegant slides on some of the slippery paths! We were all invited to Shirley's, for tea afterwards ..... a lovely ending for those of us who went on a tough but stimulating walk.

### **Saturday 21st November - The Findon flyer**

It was raining as thirteen gathered at the start in the Coombe Rise car park at Findon. However, it soon brightened up and we had just the breeze to contend with as we headed towards Pest House then circumnavigating Cissbury Ring reaching Chanctonbury Ring in good time. It was then off the top and downhill into Steyning for lunch. Then straight back up to the top of The Downs before picking up a route that would this time see us on the top of Cissbury Ring with some magnificent views of the coastline. Thanks to Kay for a great route.

### **Sunday 6th December - Christmas walk and carols**

The annual pilgrimage from Alfriston to The Cricketers at Berwick took place a week earlier than in previous years. Nine started out on a day that didn't look great but the really heavy rain didn't start until around 11.30. At The Cricketers our numbers were swelled by members who were unable to join us on the walk and the singing went well - so well in fact that there were some in the pub who thought that we were a choir! After lunch the rain and wind settled in but in spite of this seven opted for the longer loop back to Alfriston.

### **Saturday 19th December - Hassocks humbug**

With the Christmas Walk taking place a week earlier than normal the group had the opportunity to slot in another one before Christmas. Given the shortness of the daylight at this time of the year it was decided to put on a shorter walk of say, 10 miles and from a station which might provide one or two with the chance to use the public transport system. Starting at the slightly later time of 09.30am, seven set off south towards the South Downs in dry weather (although not dry ground !). Up to Wolstenbury Hill and looping down the other side towards Hurstpierpoint for lunch. The New Inn provided welcome refreshments and a roaring fire. Back at Hassocks a GPS had recorded the distance as 12.5 miles with 455m of ascent. Thanks to Chris for leading .

### **Sunday 3rd January - First of the year**

The vision was of a cold and frosty day bathed in the winter sunshine. It was not to be. The forecast for strong winds and heavy rain proved accurate. For those few who made it to the car park at Firlie the wind was so strong that it was difficult to open the car door. Given the very exposed route the reluctant consensus was to call it off – better luck next year!

*Thank you to all who participated in the walks during 2015 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 please contact me at [beestont@aol.com](mailto:beestont@aol.com)*

*Trevor Beeston, Walks Organiser*

## 5. Miscellany

### Unusual Downland Sunsets

If you were walking on the Hampshire Downs near Stockbridge in the late spring of last year you might have looked to the west, just as the day was fading, to see a lovely sunset followed by an enduring glow. That post-sunset glow was fuelled by candlepower.

Candles have been used to help pray to gods, keep time, aid relaxation and guide Florence Nightingale to her wounded soldiers – and now they have been used to care for young vines. At the Waitrose Leckford Estate around 1000 candles were placed under vines and lit to protect the plants and their crop from late spring frosts; they raised the surrounding temperature by around 1degC, sufficient to generate air movement to prevent freezing air settling on the young vines. Interesting but controversial; Waitrose proudly boasts of its 'Green' credentials whilst some members of the various environmental pressure groups are of the view that the generation of CO<sub>2</sub> and its release into the atmosphere "*just to protect posh peoples' wine*" is not acceptable.

And so if at nightfall in late spring this year you see strange lights in the west whilst walking from Alfriston back to the South Hill Barn car park on Seaford Head, it could be that the innovative frost protection technique is being used in the Rathfinny vineyard. Or it could be that you imbibed too heavily at The Smugglers before leaving the village.

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*"That's another one ticked off!"*

A few years ago a walking trip to Scotland took me to the Mamores, a group of mountains forming an east-west ridge in the Lochaber area of the Grampians and lying between Glen Nevis to the north, Loch Leven and the small town of Kinlochleven to the south. The highlight of my visit was the Ring of Steall, a circular route of around 10miles and 5000ft of ascent, to date by far my most enjoyable day walk and recommended to me by a friendly German domiciled in Kinlochleven, owner of a B&B in which I spent a night whilst walking the West Highland Way the previous year. As we talked, watching the evening shadows throw into relief the ridges and peaks far above, the man had enthusiastically described in detail the character of each of the Munros (Scottish mountains over 3000ft) encountered on the Ring. I was hooked.

The walk began with a traverse of the narrow and geologically fascinating Alpine-like gorge at the head of Glen Nevis, followed by a crossing of the River Nevis via a wire bridge (one cable underfoot, one for each hand), a scramble across the rocks at the base of the lovely Steall waterfall and then a direct ascent via a stalkers' path of An Gearanach (*The Complainer*), the first of the Munros. Next came Stob Coire a'Chairn (*Peak of the Corrie of the Cairn*), followed by Am Bodach (*The Old Man*), Sgurr an Iubhair (*Peak of the Yew*) and, after a scramble across the knife-edged 'Devil's Ridge', Sgurr a'Mhaim (*Peak of the Rounded Hill*), at 3606ft the highest of the day. From this final summit there were superb views of Stob Ban (*The White Peak*, named after its quartzite summit), Ben Nevis (Beinn Nibheis - *The Venomous Mountain*), the Carn Mor Dearg (*Big Red Hill*) arête and the Grey Corries, whilst Glen Nevis lay stretched out far beneath my feet.

Late that evening in Fort William, whilst savouring a post-walk beer and toying with a curry that I was too tired to eat, I fell into a reverie of the day's events: hard but immensely satisfying physical exertion, occasional exposure over considerable drops, exquisite far-reaching panoramas (extending east to the Cairngorm, west to Jura and Islay), *craic* with a couple of fellow walkers encountered en route, the final brutally

steep descent from Sgurr a'Mhaim to Glen Nevis, and so on. I was brought back to the present by hearing a couple of blokes at a nearby table complaining of "... *being cheated out of ticking off another one ...*". I learned they were 'Munro baggers' who, having spent a long day traversing the entire Mamore range, were annoyed that Sgurr an Iubhair had been removed from the list of Munros and relegated in status to that of a subsidiary 'top' despite its elevation of 3284ft. I mentally shrugged my shoulders, got to grips with my neglected stoup of ale and forced down another lentil.

More recently I had a short conversation with two walkers close to a 2500ft Lakeland summit and learned they were paying a brief visit to the area "... *to collect a couple of missing Nuttalls ...*". I thought with fondness of the hard-textured 'Mintoes' of my childhood, briefly wondered what sort of person would exert so much effort to come back to look for a few mislaid sweets, then remembered that a Nuttall, like a Munro, is a category of interest to those with leanings towards 'peak bagging'.

Those who are motivated to 'tick off another one' have many different lists from which to choose, even within the relatively narrow confines of the British Isles:

Munros (282 + 227 tops)	Scottish 'separate mountains' over 3000ft.
Murdos (442)	Scottish mountains over 3000ft with a minimum drop of 30m all round.
Corbetts (221 + 451 tops)	Scottish mountains between 2500 & 3000ft with prominence at least 500ft.
Donalds (89 + 51 tops)	Mountains in the Scottish Lowlands over 2000ft and with prominence at least 30m or, if of sufficient topographic interest, 15m.
Grahams (221 + 774 tops)	Scottish mountains between 2000 & 2499ft with a drop of at least 150m all round.
Furths (34)	Mountains over 3000ft in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Eire.
Nuttalls (444)	Mountains in England & Wales over 2000ft with relative height at least 15m.
Hewitts (528)	English, Welsh & Irish mountains over 2000ft with relative height at least 30m.
Wainwrights (214)	Lakeland peaks that have a chapter in one of Alfred Wainwright's <i>Pictorial Guides to the Lakeland Fells</i> .
Birketts (541)	Peaks over 1000ft within the Lake District National Park.
Marilyns (2015)	Peaks in the British Isles, the Isle of Man and Eire with prominence at least 150m regardless of absolute height.
HuMPs (ca. 3000)	UK summits with prominence of 100m.
Tumps (>16000)	UK summits with prominence of 30m.
Deweys (181)	Hills in England & Wales between 500m & 2000ft with prominence at least 30m.
Hardys (342)	The highest point in a hill range of area over 1000 acres.
County Tops (86)	The highest point of each county.

Within the LDWA Sussex domain are just four Marilyn's and two County Tops, whilst those members of the Group who took part in the Isle of Wight walking break last year paused to catch their breath atop one Marilyn and had a short drinks break on another. This must be very frustrating if you are an ardent peak bagger seeking conquests close to home, but perhaps at this time of year you might instead seek to 'bag' each of the 30 or so different forms of mud individually categorised by old Sussex dialect words.

*Limper*

## Wars Of The Roses, Part 2

Following a two-year wait for a government decision on the recommendations of a planning inspector's report, an announcement last autumn signalled the expansion and linking of the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks to create the largest continuous area of protected land in England. It seems that the size of the Yorkshire Dales NP will increase by roughly 24%, gaining 162 square miles of Lancashire and a morsel of Cumbria, whilst its much smaller Lake District counterpart will expand by around 3%. Many Yorkshire folk consider this a notable victory over the Red Rose county and a step towards the long-standing White Rose ambition to straddle northern England from sea to sea. Others proudly claim that their homeland already extends underground to the Irish Sea because a maze of potholes starting in the limestone area of North Yorkshire extends many miles westwards and a speleological convention is that the whole of a pothole belongs to the county in which its main entrance is situated.



If implemented the changes will not affect county boundaries, nor are there plans to alter the name of either of the Parks. The Yorkshire Dales NP has included parts of Cumbria since the local government reorganisation of 1973 and now it seems that residents in some other parts of that county and of Lancashire will have to swallow their pride and get used to living in an area bearing a badge upon which is the word 'Yorkshire'. These areas include the northern Howgills, part of the Orton Fells, Wild Boar Fell, Mallerstang, the Barbon Valley, the Leck Fells and part of Firbank Fell.

The long-debated revisions now need only the formal approval of the Environment Secretary and look certain to be put in place later this year. There is however last-ditch opposition from some influential critics in Lancashire and from a fifth column of dissenters in Yorkshire itself, where some councillors prefer to keep the Pennine summits as a White Rose rampart against the traditional foe.

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### Walking The Jubilee – The LDWA Sussex Group In London.

The last day of September, 2015 – a beautiful sunny Wednesday, full of gusting wind. It's 3pm and I'm in an Italian Restaurant near Paddington station, eating a Full English. The journey here started a long, long time ago in a galaxy not very far away.

In 1987 – the year I joined the LDWA – I was in the employ of an undistinguished insurance company, based in Southwark. Such was the charisma of the job and my fellow inmates that I spent most lunch hours wandering round the neighbourhood. These were the days when the financial City of London had been let off the leash and the office boom was spreading south of the river. The new Globe was still a twinkle in Mr Wanamaker's eye and much of the nearby river frontage resembled a bomb site. One feature that stood out was a sequence of silver plaques set into the riverside walks, bearing the inscription 'Silver Jubilee Walkway 1977'. This information was noted and parked away somewhere in the dark recesses of my mind, of which there are many. Life moved on and in 1989 I started working in Brighton and became heavily involved in the LDWA in all its aspects, including leading walks.

The Sussex Group January walk was always problematic. The very short days, often lousy weather and the post-Christmas dip didn't help. Contemplating this problem those silver plaques came to mind. Enquires were made – I can't remember how in those pre-

Google days – and the appropriate leaflet was finally located in a tourist office in the basement of either Harrods or Selfridges. The 12mile Walkway had been created to celebrate the Queen’s Silver Jubilee and circles the centre of London from Lambeth Bridge to The Tower and back, with extra loops to London Wall and the Barbican. The route, duly surveyed, was agreed by a somewhat sceptical Committee and the walk was set for the following year.

Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1994 – Victoria Station. By 10am 40+ walkers had arrived and panic was setting in. Managing a group of that size was a problem in the countryside – through the London streets a potential disaster. Fortunately a second leader, Tony Carter, was there and, after explaining that this was a walk not a tourist trip, we were able to shepherd the group to Lambeth Bridge, the start point. Thence along the South Bank, over Tower Bridge and into St. Katherine’s dock for lunch. We continued through the City, along Fleet Street, into Lincolns Inn Fields, full of squatters, Covent Garden, full of tourists, and on to Leicester Square and Victoria. The walkers declared the event a success, many planning a return to this or that part of the Capital for further exploration. So the tradition was established. Over the years variations have occurred. A route encompassing the London Parks, surprisingly colourful in January, proved popular. Jill and Peter Volanthen, together with Phil Latter, covered the Thames Path from Hammersmith to the Barrier, in several instalments.

London itself has greatly changed since that first walk. The South Bank, once a mixture of the great and the grot is now a continuous tourist trap and none the worse for that. The silent, windy Sunday City is no more, an overflow for those same tourists and a 24/ 7 building site. Office blocks I saw constructed and where I worked in the late sixties and seventies are long gone, replaced by bigger but not always better buildings. Despite the changes – or maybe because of them – London remains the monster it always was, vibrant and edgy, a different town from the one I grew up in but still, as then, endlessly fascinating.

What of the future? The London Jubilee Greenway – a 60k route from Buckingham Palace to the Limehouse Basin – offers possibilities. However, the best reason for continuing with the London Walks is the people who come on them. It would also help if National Rail stopped improving the Brighton Line on January weekends!

*Pathtrekker*

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### Navigation Skills

Occasionally during a social walk someone in the group has lamented his or her lack of navigational skills. If you would like some enjoyable practical field lessons in the use of map, compass and GPS please let us know via the 'Contact Us' link on the [website](#).

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## **6. ‘Your walk’**

### Wessex Weekend

It started back in 2009 when serious plans were underway for planning the Wessex 100 that would eventually be a success in 2010. The majority of that route would be in Hampshire but a short, but significant, section would cross the county boundary into West Sussex. Cooperation between the Wessex & Sussex Groups on this flagship event

ensued and in recognition of the relationship, Committee members from Sussex were invited to join their counterparts on the Wessex Group's annual weekend away.

By coincidence the 2009 getaway would be a trip to explore the delights of the Shropshire Hills. Therefore, 7 years had passed since members of the Wessex Group plus Chris and I turned up in Church Stretton to enjoy again the unspoilt countryside somewhere south of Shrewsbury.

The accommodation for the weekend would be The Longmynd Hotel which sits prominently on the hillside bursting out of the trees and looking both over the town and east and west to the hills. It was the same place we had stayed in back in 2008, a 50 bedroom hotel with a number of public rooms and a swimming pool (outside). The main difference between then and now was that it has become one of the family of Houses owned by HF Holidays and was thus very well equipped for the walker. A few weeks earlier a hardy team from Wessex had been sent on a mission to provide an itinerary that would include two routes per day over four days, Friday to Monday. More difficult would be the task of seeking out suitable watering holes in the event of serious dehydration!

As on previous occasions, both Chris and I decided to skip the required early rise on the Friday to get to Church Stretton for an 11am start. Instead it would have to be a leisurely drive to get there sometime mid-afternoon. For me this would provide perhaps the only opportunity to look round the town before the rest returned from the walk and ready to be fed.

It looked cloudy but fair as we had breakfast on the Saturday morning. There would be a shorter and longer route on offer. It had been arranged that a coach would pick everyone up and transport us to Craven Arms from which both groups would make their way back to the House at Church Stretton. Those doing the shorter walk would disembark on the A49 at Newington, just north of Craven Arms, to follow a reasonably level route along the valley of the Quinney Brook through Strefford and Alcaston and then to Acton Scott. There then would be three quarters of a mile along a quiet lane to just below Ragleth Hill. Decision time here. To take the gentler route to Little Stretton and return to the house or ascend steeply the 125 metres onto Ragleth Hill before descending northwards into Church Stretton. The longer route started further down into Craven Arms to take a path initially west and northwest up to the Long Mynd ridge. The route continued along the ridge before descending through forest towards Marshbrook where it crossed the A49 to again make for the bottom of Ragleth Hill. Having decided to climb steeply to reap the rewards from the top the route descended gently through the woods into the town. Those on the longer route would still find enough time, if they were that way inclined, to fall off the back of the group and nip into The Bucks Head for a drink and even achieve a glimpse of the World Cup rugby.

Ragleth Hill was still there as I pulled back the curtains on the Sunday morning. The only difference was that the top, including the lightning conductor that I so reassuringly clutched to the previous day had disappeared - the cloud had come down. Nevertheless, this wouldn't worry us and at least it wasn't raining. Two routes again today. The longer route would be a circular from the House. The shorter would utilise the coach again which would drop the group off at The Bog Discovery Centre just west of the southern end of the Stiperstones ridge. Both routes would head up the Stiperstones with the longer route taking in the attractive Carding Mill Valley. The higher we went the more the visibility deteriorated. Where were these Stiperstones? Then suddenly they appeared out of the mist. I was assured that the views were fantastic from here. Level along a stony path and downhill to the car park for our picnic lunch. From here along the road towards Bridges and its pub – a real gem with an open fire. As The Three Tuns Brewery Tap they offered half a dozen real ales direct from the brewery. Suitably

content we wandered along the ridge to the south and then east through Coates Farm to Priory Cottage, across the moor towards the top of the Townbrook Valley and then rapidly downhill, following the valley, and directly back to the House.

More walking on the Monday for those that stayed, this time from Clee Hill which lies south east of Church Stretton. But no, it was time to make tracks back to Sussex having enjoyed two excellent days walking and good company.

Thanks to the organiser Michael Godfrey and the team from Wessex that produced some cracking routes for a weekend of walking.

*Trevor Beeston*

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### A Short Wasdale Break

Finding accommodation in Wasdale for a two-day mid-October walking break was surprisingly difficult but eventually Martin managed to book the only available room – the family room – in the Bridge Inn at Santon Bridge, not far from the mouth of the valley. Each of us was concerned at the prospect of our snores waking the other, but needs must.

On arrival late on Thursday afternoon the receptionist provided the usual run-down of facilities, meal times etc., then warned us that the kitchen would be very busy on the Saturday evening because of a special dinner for Joss Naylor. “Ah,” we said, “*the fell runner*”. After unloading our bags we drove up the dale to Wasdale Head (claimed to be home of England's highest mountain, deepest lake, smallest church and biggest liar), pausing mid way to take in the exquisite panorama: half left was Yewbarrow with Pillar partially concealed beyond; straight ahead stood Kirk Fell and iconic Great Gable; half right loomed the Scafell group - Lingmell, Scafell Pike and Scafell itself; at our feet lay Wastwater, its surface reflecting the diagonal lines of scree running down from Illgill Head on the far side. Over tea and cake at the Wasdale Head Inn we commented on the mantle of cloud that obscured the summits of the Scafell group, our objective for the next day – surely it would have cleared by morning? Later, over our evening meal, we reviewed our intended route. We would ascend Scafell via Lord's Rake, a steep scree-filled gully at the top of which is a chockstone that has been the cause of some concern amongst the walking community, then continue to the summit of Scafell Pike.

The clouds on the summits had not lifted, indeed they appeared to be more dense and sitting a little lower. Nothing deterred, buoyed by a disturbance-free night's sleep and a satisfying breakfast, we made an early start back to the head of the dale from where we set out up the Lingmell Gill path at a steady pace. Somehow we failed to spot the entrance to the Rake on the far hillside and continued to Mickledore, the col between Scafell and Scafell Pike, necessitating a descent (at times on our backsides) from the base of Broad Stand towards our objective. Once at the foot of the gully we paused to peer upwards at the chockstone, a seemingly small obstacle plainly visible at its upper end, and to plan our line of attack. The scramble proved straightforward but as we moved upwards the 'small obstacle' gradually appeared more substantial, eventually revealing itself to be a large boulder weighing a few tons and balanced precariously on the lip of the gully. It appeared to be prevented from plummeting downwards only by a small friction hold; logic told us that the probability of it moving whilst we were below it was vanishingly small but even so it was with a sense of relief that we squeezed safely past. Then an easy climb through the cloud took us via Symonds Knott to the summit of Scafell from where through the sporadic gaps in the cloud there were tantalising glimpses of the surrounding peaks.

The descent from Scafell via the steep and tortuous path past Foxes Tarn (hardly a tarn, more a small puddle) took longer than it had to reach the summit, then another climb took us back once again to Mickledore and the base of Broad Stand where we happened across Rose and Pat, ladies with ready smiles and a comfortably substantial supply of chocolate. They were unsure of the cloud-shrouded route to Scafell Pike, were debating making an early return to their car and were pleased to join us as we followed a compass course to the summit. After the obligatory 'highest person in England' photographs it was time for a breather and a cup of coffee, and for Rose to retrieve from her pack an artist's workbook, pencil, paint brush and a palette of water-soluble inks. She sat down and sketched a portrait of Martin, who had seated himself with his back against the trig point; her work was rapid and accurate, though the finished article lacked the dewdrop at the end of his nose. As we prepared to leave the summit the leader of a group of young people sought directions back to their starting point at Seathwaite; it was not clear if he had a map, or if indeed he could read one, but he appeared completely disinterested in the one we showed to him.

Around 3000ft lower down and shortly after bidding farewell to our new-found companions, Martin and I arrived back at Wasdale Head where we judged it wise to replace lost calories with more tea and cake. Later, as we were preparing to leave the Inn, the group of young people we had seen at the summit of the Pike entered and one of them asked if transport was available to take them back to Seathwaite; they had successfully followed the route we had described as far as Sty Head, where they had turned left towards Wasdale instead of right towards Borrowdale. Although only 5 or 6 miles by foot from their intended destination they faced a very expensive (around £100) taxi ride along the long and circuitous road route. "*It happens at least once a week*" said one of the bar staff.

Many years ago I heard a naval rating describing to a shipmate someone they knew in common. "*Of course you know him ... the Taff killick ... built like a racing snake ...*". He was referring to a Welsh leading hand who was tall and painfully thin. Fast forward to our Friday evening at the Bridge Inn and in the bar there was a throng of racing snakes, the vanguard of fell runners from far and wide who were gathering for the annual Joss Naylor Challenge Dinner. The reason for our difficulty in obtaining accommodation was now clear.

Joss, 80 years old this year, is a Wasdale sheep farmer and a fell runner of awesome capability who has attracted epithets such as 'King of the Fells' and 'The Iron Man'. Perhaps his greatest feat is a 1975 traverse of 72 peaks, covering around 100miles and 38000ft of ascent, in 23hr20min. The Challenge named after him is a traverse of many of the major Lakeland peaks starting at the northern end of Ullswater, finishing next to his house in Wasdale, and involving a distance of approximately 48miles and a total ascent of around 17000ft. It is open to those aged 50 or over; each challenger who achieves a qualifying time judged appropriate to his or her age (12hr at age 50, extending to a 'generous' 48hr at age 65) is eligible to join an informal club, become the proud possessor of a tankard and have the right to attend the Challenge Dinner that is held each October at the Bridge Inn.

We found seats at a table at which sat a solitary pleasant looking chap engrossed in his iPad and it quickly became clear that he was one of those who the following evening would dine in the presence of The Iron Man. He talked incessantly whilst we waited for our food to be brought to the table, whilst we ate it, and later whilst we indulged in our postprandial beer ritual. We were subject to a litany that constituted a teach-in on the art, craft and achievements of fell runners:

*"The correct feeding strategy is crucial ... be careful with protein ... porridge is good ... so are cornflakes ... eat too little and you keel over ... eat too much and you throw up ... I always weigh my food ..."*

*"At the speed we run there isn't enough time to look at a route description ... I run it out before the event and learn to recognise the rocks I pass ... I give them names that I memorise so I can recognise them ... it's crucial I don't forget which one I've hidden my cache of food next to ..."*

*"Support for your quads and hamstrings is key... close-fitting SKINS half-tights support the ITB and TFL muscle groups ... you need to keep your Tensor Fascia Lata as flexible as possible ..."*

*"Joss's record for up and down the Pike is 47 minutes ... during the descent he was being filmed from a chase helicopter ... he reckons the downdraught blew him down ... in the film he looks like a daddy long-legs, arms and legs all over the place ..."*

*"Do you know Tryfan? ... yes? ... well ... Mike Blake holds the record for the descent from Adam and Eve to the A5 ... he did it in 8 minutes ..."*

And so it continued, without pause. My admiration for the dedication and toughness (mental and physical) of the fell runner increased at the same rate as did my headache.

Our programme for Saturday was modest and began with an exploration of the Stygian depths of Piers Gill, an impressive gash in the northern flank of Scafell Pike. The path follows the edge of the gill, is a wonderfully scenic approach to the upper reaches of the Pike and is sufficiently demanding to deter the crowds that are a feature of the Lingmell Gill and Corridor routes. It is however best avoided as a descent route after dark, witness the all too frequent mobilisation of the local mountain rescue team to recover the bodies of unfortunate souls who half way down the gill have failed to negotiate a sharp right turn at a point on the lip of a precipitous drop.

After retracing our steps to Spouthead Gill we followed the switchback line of the old packhorse route that was once a vital link between Wasdale and Borrowdale. From Sty Head it was a steady climb to the summit of Great Gable where the strong and icy



easterly wind deterred us from lingering for longer than was necessary to gulp down a cup of rapidly cooling coffee and to take a few photographs. Then it was back down to Wasdale Head for our final helping of tea and cake, pausing en route to admire the views of the Napes Needles shrouded in cloud and of Wastwater under a glowering sky.

An early return to the Bridge Inn, now thronged with fell runners in best bib and tucker, allowed time for a hot bath and a Real Ale aperitif before a meal that we planned would be taken soon after the kitchen staff had finished catering for the Challenge Dinner. So much for the plan. In the event, despite our best endeavours, either we mistimed our food order or (more likely) it was mislaid by a new and inexperienced member of staff. We ate at a very late hour.

At one stage during our protracted wait I ventured to the bar and struck up a conversation with a bearded man a few years my senior. One of the bar staff appeared mildly amused when I asked the man if he knew the area well? ("*Aye, fairly well*") - and

the fell runners? ("*Aye, fairly well*") - and Joss himself? ("*Aye, fairly well*"). On return to the table Martin informed me that I had been talking to Eric Robson - Wasdale resident, presenter of numerous Lakeland-related TV programmes, chairman of *Gardeners' Question Time* etc. Next to him as he patiently and politely humoured me had stood one of the racing snakes, fretting and looking longingly into the dining room in which Joss and his acolytes were eating. "*I've done the qualifying time but I'm only 49 and so I'm not allowed in*" he said, wistfully, "*I can't join the club yet ... I can't wait to be 50!*".

Wasdale is one of my favourite walking locations and so it was with some reluctance that early the next morning I put my bag, pack, boots and poles into the boot of the car in preparation for the return trip south. A little while into our journey, as the car breasted a rise to afford us a retrospective view of the now cloud-free Scafell group, we broke our companionable silence.

*"Did you notice what our Friday evening acquaintance had for his breakfast this morning?"*

*"No ... what did he have?"*

*"A few cornflakes and a couple of spoons of yoghurt"*

*"Did he weigh them?"*

*David Weatherley*

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## **7. Dorset Dawdle 2016**

A short break in Dorset is planned for the period Thursday 19th May - Sunday 22nd May, with full day walks on the Friday and Saturday. There will be the option of a shorter walk on the Sunday for those who wish to stay an extra day. The historic town of Dorchester will be used as a base and it will be the responsibility of individuals to make their own arrangements for accommodation. The walks will comprise a mixture of inland and coastal routes in an area of outstanding natural beauty, picturesque villages, welcoming hostelrys and, hopefully, high quality cream tea establishments. Not to be confused with the annual Dorset Duddle Challenge event (32miles over very demanding coastal terrain), the Dawdle will comprise relaxed walks designed for enjoyment rather than for extreme distance. If you might wish to join us please enter your name and email address via the link on the 'Home' page of our [website](#) and you will be provided with further details in due course.

***Thank you to those who have provided material for this edition. Contributions suitable for inclusion in the next (July 2016) edition would be most welcome, as would constructive suggestions for ways in which the newsletter might be improved.***