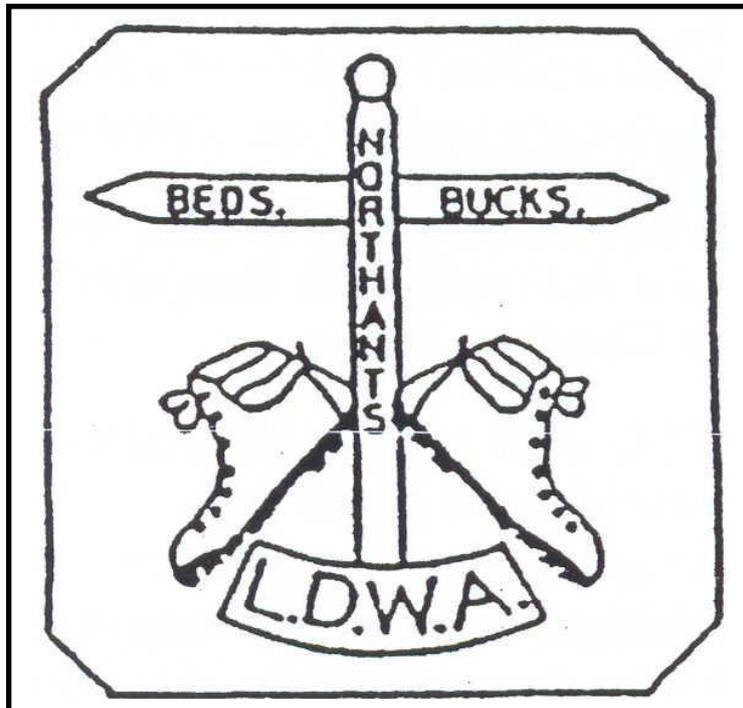


**BEDS, BUCKS, &
NORTHANTS
GROUP
NEWSLETTER**
February 2011



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Well here we are again, its time for your very own newsletter again. I hope you all had a great Xmas and a merry New Year. I myself dressed up as a French maid and walked down to my local to see the New year in.

So whats in store for you this time around in your very own n/l A lot of business stuff in this one, a couple of Thusday walks by our very own Gill B, and who wants to go to Ireland. Oh yeh, and them jokes. That's it folks, don't forget to send in your articles for the next n/l coming up in June.

Big Huggies

Ed

PS, good luck to all of you taking part in the Housman 100, how about letting me know about your experiances of the 100 for the next nl.

**Articles for the June
 Newsletter by
 22nd June PLEASE**

Ed



Local Groups Representatives Meeting

HAVE A GREAT DAY OUT, WALK WITH THE BBN

9.00am Sunday 14th November 2010
Conwy Youth Hostel

Present

Richard Denby (Bristol & West)	Bill Bowers (Essex & Herts)
Edith Moran (Cleveland)	Mike Buckley (Heart of England)
Geraldine Gould (Cornwall & Devon)	Paul Tilley (London)
Noel Gould (Cornwall & Devon)	Diane Smith (Northumbria)
Tony Deall (Cumbria)	John Phillips (South Pennine)
John Batham (East Yorkshire)	Chris Baines Holmes (Sussex)
Jean Bowers (Essex & Herts)	Phil Heneghan (Wiltshire)
	Andy Ward (West Yorkshire)

Apologies received from

Beds Bucks & Northants, Calderdale, Dorset, East Lancashire, High Peak, Merseystride, Mid Wales, Surrey, The Irregulars, Wessex & Westmorland & North Lancs.

National Committee Representatives

Paul Lawrence
John Sparshatt

Meeting chaired by John Phillips
Minutes taken by team effort

LDWA 40th Anniversary: The LDWA is scheduled to celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2012 and the views of the Local Groups were being sought on how this should be undertaken.

It was agreed the occasion should be marked and we could possibly secure some good publicity.

The 2012 100 will be visiting several places relevant to the history of LDWA. The Ramblers recently celebrated their 75th Anniversary with a 'baton/relay' walk around the UK. Groups felt this idea OK but possibly not appropriate for us and an idea for a month of special celebration walks (September 2012 mooted) more favourably received. The suggestion of a nominated person to coordinate the celebration event(s), possibly in a non committee role, was floated.

Is now the right opportunity to redesign our logo which could now perhaps be viewed as sexist? Do we have a completely new logo or do a minor amendment to our existing logo? Perhaps some ideas could be put forward for the AGM to consider. It is recognised that some people may not be keen on a revised logo.

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION

AIM: - TO FURTHER THE INTERESTS OF THOSE WHO ENJOY LONG DISTANCE WALKING

In addition to updating the logo there was discussion about rebranding with several feeling 'Long Distance Walkers Association' a bit of a mouthful and something snappier being needed?

Possibility of a special one off Anniversary edition of Strider being produced was raised and idea seemed very well supported.

It was suggested the committee may wish to consider a high profile speaker for the 2012 AGM, even if this increased cost of event. An exhibition outlining LDWA history at the AGM would be well received.

Paul Lawrence remarked that Keith Chesterton is writing a history of the LDWA and any publication of this to coincide with our 40th would be nice.

LDWA Website: Following the recent sad news regarding Reg Chapman, Paul Lawrence advised that Simon Leck has been nominated to assume the role of Website and Internet Coordinator. However, Simon will not have the time to get involved to the extent that Reg did and the LDWA will need to pay for support from Mark Hawker who is familiar with our systems. If there are any members with IT skills that are willing to offer help, they will be welcomed.

In addition to the Website, Reg also arranged for the Membership DDM's to be processed. Ian Beveridge, the LDWA treasurer has agreed to accept responsibility for their collection going forward.

In terms of future enhancements, there are several suggestions already in hand. Some members have difficulty uploading photos for example. The Groups felt that the website was a crucial tool in our armoury and we need to continue to invest in its development. Tony Deall and Mike Buckley offered to attend future computer development meetings on behalf of the Local Groups. Our ultimate aim should be that all groups would want to use the LDWA offering rather than doing their own thing.

Last Minute Walks: A recent request had been made about the possibility of forming a new group which would not publish walks in Strider but would organise walks at the last minute and put these on the website only. The rationale behind the request is the difficulty in getting leaders to commit to leading walks several months in advance. The meeting felt that existing arrangements are satisfactory and walks organised after publication of Strider can still be recorded on the website. The only difficulty occurs if the authorised person is unavailable for a few days and unable to 'release' the walk. This is the issue which should be addressed, if necessary. The meeting were against a separate group being formed.

Groups were reminded that it was imperative that all walk leaders are fully paid up LDWA members.

Suggestion made to show on the website an indicator to highlight those walks either added or amended after Strider deadlines.

HAVE A GREAT DAY OUT, WALK WITH THE BBN

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION

AIM: - TO FURTHER THE INTERESTS OF THOSE WHO ENJOY LONG DISTANCE WALKING

Attracting new & existing members on to walks: Discussion regarding attracting members on to Group walks. The following suggestions were made as being helpful for some Groups and certainly worth trying:

Monthly e mail update to members providing more information not only about the walk but also how to get there, whether there will be a pub stop etc

Some members not able to get out on walks but love being asked to help on checkpoints etc. and this keeps them involved

Ensure someone makes new members welcome. Don't just assume someone else will do it. First impressions count.

Some groups do figure of 8 walks which allow a shorter option for newcomers who may not complete the full distance.

Have enough walks to maintain interest. In groups with large geographical areas it could be quite a period between walks local to the individual member, especially if only 1 walk per month.

Offer shorter summer evening walks to create interest

Offer walks with something a little different – e.g. a night walk

Consider offering some walks at a slower pace or shorter distance. Some walkers may be apprehensive that they can't keep up and need something to boost their confidence, at least initially.

Catering for the quicker walker: Generally felt that the onus is on the quicker walker to fit in with the group pace and if not willing to do so then they should concentrate on Challenge walks. The issue of very slow walkers then discussed and how to manage the situation. Felt that these people realise they are on an inappropriate walk and usually drift away.

100 Events: Cornwall & Devon group wished to sound out other groups regarding certain matters relating to the 100 in 2013.

Firstly they sought confirmation that the LDWA would not be developing their own online entry system. This was confirmed and Sportident or Runners World was recommended as viable alternatives.

Are maps required and to what scale? It was felt that maps for the 100 were a good idea and were a treasured reminder of the route for the entrants. 1:25000 maps were probably going to be too large and 1:50000 easier to carry but ultimately the decision is for the organisers. Not mandatory for a map to be produced.

Electronic recording systems on offer were regarded as expensive and not ideal for LDWA needs and were generally felt unnecessary.

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION

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Paul Lawrence gave an update on 2012 100 as follows:

Due to other events taking place in 2012, it appears that tents, marquees and portaloos are now very scarce. If anyone knows of a source (e.g. local group or scout group) of tents etc, Paul would be grateful for a contact name.

Checkpoints – Half the checkpoints still need groups to man them and an appeal will be appearing in the forthcoming Strider.

The youth hostel at Tanners Hatch will be used as a checkpoint. The LDWA would like a group to hire the hostel in its entirety for the 100 weekend. A contribution towards the cost may be made by LDWA. Hostel based at 55 miles and is the checkpoint prior to the breakfast stop. Please contact Paul if interested.

Environmental Statement: Carol Coyne had produced an environmental statement for the LDWA which had been discussed at national committee. This is a general statement outlining our policy on environmental matters with any detail being included in specific documents such as ‘Guidelines for Events’. Meeting generally comfortable with the statement.

Group Membership: Confusion seems to apply to who is able to be a group member and who is eligible to vote at a group AGM. At one time groups charged an additional fee for group membership and therefore members were clearly defined. Several groups do not charge a fee for group membership so now unclear who is a group member and who isn't. Groups were asked to examine their constitutions and satisfy themselves that they were happy with the wording and if not, modify them at their AGM.

One group has a problem of loyal attendees refusing to join LDWA but still turn up on walks and attend the AGM and eat the supper provided. They will be refused entry this year. Await developments with interest.

Challenge Events: Again there has been a little upset due to groups not discussing their Challenge walk plans with neighbouring groups. By the time the LDWA Events Secretary receives details of an event the planning is at an advanced stage, so little the Events Secretary can do to eliminate clashes. Nobody wishes to lose money on an event, so cooperation is paramount.

Challenge Events as Group Walks: Is it acceptable for a group to offer a group walk which is another group's current challenge event? Mixed reactions. Some not bothered but others are. All agree that if this is happening there should be at least a courtesy telephone call to check whether there are any objections to this. Also to ensure there is not an issue with use of private land.

Shorter Group Walks: It had been noted that the latest walks programme had fewer long walks than equivalent periods in past years and was there a trend developing towards shorter walks? If so, why was this happening and is this an issue? No real answers were forthcoming but suggestions of an ageing membership perhaps significant.

Health of LDWA: Paul Lawrence gave an update on current health of LDWA.

Membership stands at circa 6900 which is 500 more than the equivalent time last year. Increasing percentage of new female members.

Calendar being issued this year with December Strider to all LDWA members.

No plans for a Membership fee increase at present.

Healthy surplus last year of £14k, restoring reserves to £124k.

Trailwalkers Handbook continues to sell well.

A potential new group in the Heart of Scotland are trialling a couple of walks in spring 2012 and it is hoped a new group will evolve.

An insurance claim is being handled by our insurers. Just a reminder that it is essential to keep accident records.

LDWA has a Donations Policy and if groups have an initiative they would like supporting, then please submit to national committee for consideration. Last year 2 new trails (6 Dales Trail & Breath of Fresh Air) received a contribution.

Any Other Business:

Is it being worth represented at the Outdoors Show? Meeting felt that this had limited value and would involve significant time and money.

Group representatives enjoyed the weekend but expressed disappointment at the number of groups not represented. Perhaps some groups feel that it must be the secretary who attends but this is not the case. Earlier booking and perhaps a more central location may help.

Meeting closed at 2.00pm

Nigel Schofield - 28 January 2011

Notes following National Committee Meeting 29/01/2011

Following the sad loss of Reg Chapman, Simon Leck has agreed to take on the role of Internet officer for the present. Simon is in full time employment and does not have the time that Reg was able to give to the LDWA and he will adopt a strategic role. This will mean that we will have to pay more for outside support than previously.

This year the LDWA utilised the services of a firm called Easycollect to collect DDM's and the collections had been successful. Overall renewals at the date of the meeting were around 5,700 and the non renewals will be due a reminder shortly. There is a time and expense to this, but the number of additional renewals usually make this worthwhile.

Treasurer advised an operating surplus of c £14k this year, but outsourcing DDM collections and IT development will have cost implications.

LDWA 40th Anniversary – Intention is to do a celebration based around September 2011 and this will be discussed in more detail at the AGM. The issue of revised logo will also be raised at AGM – a couple of alternative designs may be available for consideration.

The hotel hosting the AGM weekend in March is full and additional bookings are being referred to the Premier Inn nearby.

Following the Local Groups meeting in November, Tony Deall and Mike Buckley (representing local groups) met with the Internet sub committee and discussed the upgrade of the Local Groups website. A programme of work has been costed and approved by the committee. Other IT work such as a 100 template for future use by 100 organisers was also approved.

Progress on the next 3 100's is to plan and there is a possibility, subject to no objections by the Olympic committee, that the 2012 100 will be known as the Games 100.

Committee approved Lothian & Borders group renaming themselves as Central & Lowlands

BBN COMMITTEE MEETING FRIDAY 28 JANUARY 2011

CHAIRMANS REPORT - AGENDA ITEM 3a

To the Committee and all BBN Members

Very belated best wishes to everyone for the New Year and I hope that the inclement weather in December and early January has not prevented you from being out and about on walks and enjoying the festive celebrations. I managed to get out in the Chilterns on 28 December for a walk reeve and there was still a fair amount of snow around. Some good drifts on the western side of Beacon Hill for yomping but the top and eastern side were clear.

Thank you to all Members who attended the AGM on 28 November, a very cold day and thanks to Gill Bunker and Norman Corrin for organising the meal and meeting respectively.

A special mention 'in despatches' for Therese Jamin and the walk on 16 January 'Remembering the SOES'. Very moving at Gibraltar Farm Barn and Everton Churchyard. Those of us who were able to listen to Nicole Carbonara (London LDWA) did so with open mouths as she described the activities of her father as a resistance fighter and that she never met him.

We move into 2011 with our first Challenge - The Chiltern Kanter. The Marshalls' walk is on Saturday 19 February and the event is on Sunday 27 February. Norman would love to see you on the 19th and that if possible help as a Marshall on the event. Also more the merrier at Checkpoint 1 on the Houseman 100. This is a BBN hosted checkpoint and if you have not signed up please contact Norman - thanks.

As always your Committee and others work tirelessly on your behalf to organise events and arrange a very full social walks programme and Thursday programme. Dee will always love to hear from you to propose a walk.

As always 'please think what you could do for BBN and not necessarily what the BBN can do for you' and don't forget 'to have a great day out on a walk with BBN'.

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Walks since the **AGM**

- 12 December - Mistletoe at Missenden (12) BBN
- 28 December - Chilterns Recce (20)
- 29 December to 2 Jan - SW Coast Path (St Ives to Cape Cornwall)
- 9 January - Leatherhead Circular (20) Surrey Walking Club
- 16 January - Remember the SOEs (16) BBN
- 22 January - Chilterns Recce (20) trying to put more hills in route!!

Planned Walks

- 30 January - Kathy's Birthday walk (12) CLOG
- 6 February - Coulsden Circular (17) Surrey Walking Club
- 13 February - Punchbowl Marathon (30) SURREY
- 19 - 21 February - North Norfolk Coast
- 27 February - Marshall on Chiltern Kanter
- 6 March - Guildford Circular (22) Surrey Walking Club
- 11 - 18 March - Gomera (Canary Islands)
- 20 March - Sevenoaks Circular (30) KENT
- 27 March - Daffodil Dawdle (27) - NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK
- 3 April - Newbury Circular (21) Recce - LONDON
- 10 April - Three Rs and Risborough Rollercoaster final recce (20) BBN and SWG
- 16/17 April - Wellington Boot (62.5) CORNWALL AND DEVON
- 29 April - 1 May - Isle of Purbeck (SWG)

Secretary's Notes

BBN Website

Merrian Lancaster who is now a lady of leisure has been busy over the last couple of months creating the new BBN website which can be found at the following address:

<http://www.ldwa.org.uk/bedsbucksandnorthants>

The site is still under construction and there is a link to the previous website created by Steve Clark.

One of the improvements is that BBN social walks are now uploaded automatically from the national LDWA website.

At the latest committee meeting on Friday 28th January Merrian raised several questions with the committee and these will be in the committee meeting minutes when they are complete and loaded onto the website.

Please have a look and give us your opinions and any suggestions for improvements

HAVE A GREAT DAY OUT, WALK WITH THE BBN

LONG DISTANCE WALKERS ASSOCIATION

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Social Events

There will not be a BBN quiz event this year as I've run out of questions and Steve Smith has run out of T-Shirts.

Themed Social Walks are becoming very popular so if anyone has any suggestions for such events then please contact me or any other committee member. Equally the social event does not have to be a walk it can be a skittles or quiz evening at a pub. Get your thinking (and drinking) hats on

BBN Subs

The BBN subs are due by the 31st of March. Please send your £1 payments to John Nickerson at his new address which is below:

1 Irthing Close, Bedford, Beds, MK41 7TP

No £1 no newsletter or no emails (a blessed relief some might say!)

BBN AGM

The groups' AGM is rotated each year around the 3 counties of the group, Beds, Bucks and Northants. Last year it was held in Silsoe Bedfordshire and this year on November 27th it will be held in Northamptonshire. If anyone knows of a venue that could be used for this event such as a village hall with an adjacent pub or a pub with a separate room to hold the AGM (with room for 40 members seated) then please let me know. The deadline for this is by the 1st May as it has to go to our Walks Secretary Dee Brockway for inclusion in the August Strider.

Blacks and Milletts Discount

One of my other hats that I wear is arranging discounts nationally for the LDWA.

Blacks and Milletts have started a scheme where they will offer LDWA members discounts of up to 15% on certain items.

However the company will issue their own specialist discount card to us. Production of an LDWA membership card will not be sufficient to claim this discount.

If anyone wishes to subscribe to this scheme please let me know either by email, phone or writing. I will then submit a list of interested members to Blacks and they will send me the cards which I will issue to BBN members.

The cards will be valid for a year and then have to be renewed. Don't ask me about that bit just yet!

I won't be supplying addresses, it will be names only.

HAVE A GREAT DAY OUT, WALK WITH THE BBN

The Housman 100 Saturday 23rd May - Monday 25th May 2011
BBN Checkpoint

Well it's that time again when we start asking for helpers for the BBN Checkpoint on the LDWA 100 this time being held in those blue remembered hills of Shropshire. Over the 2nd May Bank Holiday from Saturday 28th May to Monday 30th May 2011.

As with the Wessex 100 we're on our own as a group and are manning CP 1 which is an open air tented checkpoint the details of which are shown below.

Location: School Wood
Distance: 9 miles
Grid Reference SO 481768.
Open 1130.
Closes 1700

With its' location this is going to be a fairly short but also fairly sharp experience! There are 3 starts to the event, one at 1000, one at 1200 and one at 1400. To make the job easy we need about 20 people to man the checkpoint. Once our stint is over any of our group members will be able to follow friends and/or family around the course and support them. An encouraging word or the sight of a friendly face at a checkpoint or halfway between can make all the difference.

For anyone who is new to the group and the LDWA this is a chance to experience the unique atmosphere of the LDWA's Flagship Event. Who know you might even be tempted to take part!

If anyone is interested please contact me

Norman Corrin

2012 100 Marshals' Event

Saturday to Monday, 5th/7th May 2012

Dave and I are tasked with the organisation of this event.

We have booked both Eastern HQ and Western HQ and most of the checkpoints. There are still three checkpoints and the breakfast stop still to finalise. These outstanding sites have been earmarked and the negotiations are in progress.

We have three sweep teams in place but need **one more to cover from 25 miles to 44 miles.**

We have two closing marshals and a 'body bus' volunteer assigned.

We still need **help** with **parking and check-in duties** at the Windsor HQ both for 06.00 to 09.30 Saturday morning and from about 16.00 on Sunday until 10.00 Monday.

We send a big thank you to all of you who have already been assigned jobs. If anyone else out there would like to add their names to our volunteer list, please contact us as soon as possible.

Many thanks.

Lynn and Dave Yorston

**Castlebar International 4 Days Walks, County Mayo, Eire, Thursday
30th June to Sunday 3rd July 2011**

This years' trip abroad will be a trip to the Castlebar International 4 days Walks in Castlebar, County Mayo, Eire from Thursday 30th June to Sunday 3rd July 2011.

Steve Clark did this event back in 2008 and I did it in 2009 and the craic was awesome!

For those of us who've done an international event before this is part of the International Marching League calendar of events which encourages mass participation events at varying distances.

For those of us who haven't then this is an ideal opportunity to get a flavour of how relaxed and enjoyable and carnival like the big events can be abroad. I've done several of the big walks but there is something deliciously chaotic and friendly about the Castlebar 4 days

As with the other IML events there are several distances available such as 20 or 40 km road walks. However unique to Castlebar are the 30 km rambles which are led walks over the delightful Irish countryside. The last couple of years there have been several hundred participants.

There are several accommodation options available such as a hotel, guesthouse, B&B, self-catering, or for those of us on a budget but is keen to take part camping or sports halls.

I've made provisional bookings at the Nephin Halls which are - 2-bedroom self catering apartments. They sleep a maximum of 4 people for a minimum of 5 night stay. The rate for 5 nights is € 330. The link to the halls is <http://www.nepinhalls.com/>

The itinerary is for us to travel over on Wednesday 29th June from Luton Airport to Knock International Airport and return Monday 04th July. The airline will be Ryanair and there is only one flight each day by this airline.

From Knock we'll be taken by taxi to Castlebar and by the same method for the return journey for which we'll have to pay. With sufficient numbers the journey comes to about £10 each way. This is arranged by the walk organisers who will request our flight details when we enter for the walk

I've attached the link to the Castlebar walks website: <http://www.castlebar4dayswalks.com/>

The link to the International Marching League for information on other overseas events is <http://www.imlwalking.org/>

The construction of Knock International Airport is a tale in itself and I've attached a link to the Irish World newspaper article about the construction of it

http://www.theirishworld.com/article.asp?SubSection_Id=2&Article_Id=1463

If anyone is interested can they please contact me by my email address or telephone number 01908 608667

Regards
Norman

Comedy Corner

I went to the doctors. He said 'I'd like you to lie on the couch'.
I said 'What for?'
He said 'I'd like to sweep the floor'

This little old lady was frightened. She looked at me, she said 'Do something religious'.
So I took up a collection

A policeman stopped me the other night he taps on the window of the car and says:
'Would you please blow into this bag, Sir?'
I said: 'What for, Officer?'
He says: 'My chips are too hot'.

I got stopped again last night by another policeman. He says:
'I'd like to follow you to the nearest Police Station'.
I said 'What For?'
He said: 'I've forgotten the way'.

"Cos it's strange, isn't it.
You stand in the middle of a library and go aaaaagghhhh' and everyone just stares at you.
But you do the same thing on an airplane, and everyone joins in.

I won a once in a lifetime holiday in a competition recently. I tell you what never again!

JOHN and JUDY'S AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND 2011

The Cotswolds

This year we have decided on the Cotswolds for our weekend. There are 3 walks over the weekend - Saturday 27, Sunday 28 and Monday 29 August 2011. The ideal base for the walks is Stroud. The start of the Sat walk is about 7 miles from Stroud, the Sun and Mon walks about 3 miles. Please let John or Judy know beforehand if you are coming, as it helps us. We leave at 09.00 prompt. Our home number is 01234 301817. Mobile on days of walks 07761 257743 or 07913 740455.

Sat 27 August start time 9.00 - The Cotswolds Four Peaks

Park courteously in the village of Uley, the walk will start from the church. Grid ref: ST 791 986. The main street in Uley is quite wide so parking should not be a problem

This is perhaps the nicest walk of the weekend. It is hilly but does not compare with Crinkle Crags. A shorter walk is available if required. Please let John and Judy know beforehand if you would like a shorter option, this misses out one of the peaks. This walk goes from the village of Uley to the Tyndale monument atop the wonderful named Nibley Knoll (a notable hill) and back again in an ad hoc circuit using tracks, footpaths and the odd bit of tarmac. The Tyndale Monument, a tower, is a tribute to William Tyndale who first translated the Bible into English and was later burned at the stake for heresy. The route also includes the Iron Age hill fort Uley Bury, a fort built by Celts who ruled here sometime between 300 BC and 100 AD. There are 4 hills altogether hence the title: Cam Long Barrow, Stinchcombe Hill which rises above Dursley and is the hill the shorter version will miss out, Nibley Knoll and at the end Uley Bury.

This is about 16 miles but the ascent makes up for the lack of distance.

Sun 28 August start time 9.00 – Walking with Rosie visiting Painswick Beacon, Cranham Common and Slad

Slad is the backcloth to Laurie Lee's most popular novel 'Cider with Rosie' hence the title.

We start the walk in Painswick, there is a car park close to the church, Wick Street car park on the corner of Stamage Lane. Grid ref: SO 865 095. Parking is free on Sundays. From here we go north close to the village of Paradise up to visit another Iron Age Fort on Painswick Beacon. Those of you who have done the Cotswold challenge will be familiar with this. From here we head north to Cooper's Hill, famous for the cheese rolling competition, before turning south to Cranham Common with great views and orchids in season. We pass close to Overtown and then go down

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to Sheepscombe the location of Laurie Lee's sloping cricket ground and from here down to Slad itself. Finally the walk goes round Pitchcombe Hill before returning to Painswick. Part of this walk will be on the Cotswold Way. There will also be a provision for a shorter walk today if required. Long walk is 17.5 and the shorter version which misses Pitchcombe Hill is 13.5 miles.

Mon 29 August start time 9.00 – Weaving in the Stroud valley starting from the village of Bisley

Start: Exact start place to be advised, we hope to be able to use the Village Hall car park. We start at Bisley near to the church. We walk south to hit the Thames and Severn canal which we cross south of Oakridge Lynch. We then proceed to Chalford church after which we follow the canal tow path for a time, old mills and factories line the route here showing the impact of the industrial revolution in the steep-sided Cotswold valleys. We have a climb for you again today up beside 'the Heavens' to Nether Lypiatt Manor before turning NE up the Toadsmoor valley and back to Bisley. This walk is shorter to allow an early start home, it is about 15 miles, there is not really a shorter version, but there is a possibility of cutting a mile off.

Accommodation: There is a Premier Inn in Stroud where we are staying, there is also a Travelodge about 4 miles away at Stonehouse as well as various B&Bs. We have found a pub which we feel will be quite suitable for the meal on Sunday night. We will book a table nearer the time, please let us know if you are coming.

Wandering the Downs – Thursday 11th November

The weather forecast was horrendous - heavy rain and strong winds – and only nine hardy regulars met on top of Dunstable Downs for Roger's wander. Happily for us, we were walking in the lea of the hills and were very grateful for the shelter of the well wooded undulating countryside. This was a figure of 8 walk passing twice through Studham and by the time we returned a second time across Studham Common for our mid-day stop the sun had appeared and a rainbow crossed the valley.

A walk on Remembrance Day and there are two War Memorials in Studham. The memorial for World War I is the Memorial Clock – and some of us rested on its steps at lunch time and noted the names recalled in its wording. The brick bus shelter where we took refuge mid-morning is the village's memorial for World War II.

Gill Bunker

A Review of the Great Train Robbery – Thursday 13th January

The first Thursday walk of the New Year saw most of the Usual Suspects meeting in Ivinghoe for a walk led by Judy and John. Unusually, we would be walking in the flatlands to the north of the Chilterns.

We paused on the green at the Memorial Bench dedicated to our founder members which some people had not yet seen, and then set off by footpath skirting the village and on to the canal. Here we turned northwards and then on by road and field for a mid-morning break at Mentmore. There were good views over the valley and we could see the fields where we would soon be walking and which would lead us to the railway and the highlight of our walk.

As we stood on the bridge at Sears Crossing near Ledburn new man Mike told us how in the early hours of 8th August 1963 highly organised thieves stopped the Glasgow to Euston Mail Train at that very bridge by covering the green light with a glove and putting their own light behind the red light. They then moved the diesel loco and first two carriages on to the next bridge, Bridego, where the road goes under the railway. Here they unloaded 120 mailbags holding over £2.6 million worth of banknotes (£35+m at today's values). Mike explained that this was perhaps the only place on the journey where they could stop the train by tampering with the lights as on this stretch the signals were remote from Leighton Buzzard and Cheddington signal boxes in each direction. No firearms were used, but the train driver was badly beaten and sadly was never able to return to his normal work. The event, immediately dubbed the Great Train Robbery, captured the public's imagination and quickly became part of British folklore. Most of the money was never recovered.

A pleasant lunch was taken by the canal at Grove Lock with plenty of seating on the lock gates. The afternoon saw us heading south with good views towards the hills and back to Ivinghoe. A bit of splashing in the fields with the snowmelt and some sticky mud, but another very enjoyable walk from John and Judy with the added interest of learning a lot more about the events of that infamous night nearly 50 years ago.

Gill Bunker

Thursday 25th November 2010 – Ouse Valley Walk –leader Brian Harwood

Sixteen of us met at Great Barford Church where Brian gave us the plan for the day and distributed a few maps. I like to be told the plan, where we going, how many stops, how far, etc, thank you Brian. For the record there was our leader, me, DFH, Roger & Margaret Skerman, Gill Bunker, John & Judy Nickerson, Jim Morrison, John Chesher, Phil Hastings, Derek Jacob, Peter Bearne, Roger O'Dea, Eric Cartwright and a new member, Terry Walsh. We started over the bridge (note, Gt Barford is twinned with Wollstein), seeing swans and a narrow boat. In the early stages, we had updates on Judy's knee, she's up to 9 miles, the Nickerson house move and saw more swans. We saw a penstock (sluice) at Blunham South, and Brian warned us of rabbit holes in the sandy banks of the River Ivel; we were all nervously keeping an eye on Judy along here. We picked up the Kingfisher Way, a 21 mile long distance walk along the banks of the River Ivel from its source near Baldock its junction with the Great Ouse at Tempsford. A bit of useful info...where there's an Environment Agency sign, there's always a grid ref. I've made a note that we saw a shiny thing at tea break, I hope someone remembers what that's all about. Roger found 5p, but I don't think that was the shiny thing. At Thamesford airfield we passed a pigsty, actually a fire hut, and soon (shortly, eventually) got to Gibraltar Farm for lunch; the pigeons have made it very mucky. Mr Nickerson told a naughty joke, something about frequently and infrequently. Gibraltar Farm Barn was a building on the airfield (adapted to continue looking like a normal farm barn, to fool German air-reconnaissance) where agents were supplied with their equipment...and their cyanide pills, in case of capture. Inside, there are moving memorials to individual R.A.F. aircrews and S.O.E. agents. After lunch, we picked up the Ouse Valley Way. The River Great Ouse flows from its source near Brackley to the sea at King's Lynn, running through Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. The boozers managed a swift half in the Wheatsheaf in Tempsford Church End, thank you Gill. Blunham Parish Church is St Edmund Or St James, very odd. I haven't found out about the name yet but there's lots on the web about the church, including that John Donne, preacher and metaphysical poet, was Rector of Blunham 1621-31, at the same time as Dean of St Paul's. There were some intriguing house names in Blunham, The Ragged Staff, Shoe Cottage, The Ovens and Battle Cottage. I haven't much of a clue where we went, it was a good walk because there was a kissing gate. My GPS threw a wobbly and said we'd done 3155 miles, with a moving average of 1440mph. Jim says, apart from the swans, we didn't see any wildlife

Thursday 2nd Dec 2010 Ronde van Groot Linford Leader: Not Adrian Moody

We gathered in the snow at the Nags Head in Linford Village, Milton Keynes, but by 9.45 were still without a leader – subsequent apology revealed he had fallen victim to traffic problems on the way from Aylesbury. Luckily, as DF-H had seen the intended route map he volunteered to lead and the 12 of us set off through Linford Manor grounds to pick up the Swan's Way bridleway which here runs parallel to the old Newport Pagnell to Wolverton railway line (now one of MK's Redways). As we reached the end of this section and regrouped, the snow had stopped and the sky brightened. Reaching Loughton Valley we joined the park leisure path heading southward along the brook, passing close to the remains of the Roman Villa visited on one of Judy's walks. After several sightings of little egrets in flight, on to the concrete cows, a much-vandalised sculpture (originals now in safe keeping). Traffic on the nearby Euston main line was brisk, unlike some parts of the country. On, through the park, following the brook to Lodge Lake – tea stop. John Seed left us after tea (he's recovering from a major hip operation). Round the lake and on, via Loughton Village, to the Teardrop Lakes, then past the Bowl outdoor concert arena and turned eastward towards Peartree Bridge, where Judy, recovering from knee surgery, stopped as it was 50 metres from her house. Over the canal into Woughton-on-the-Green and lunch at the Swan. Another departure – Brian Graves had to prepare to lead an evening running group (the fact that after 6 or 7 miles he was going to lead them into Wetherspoons for curry and beer.....). So, nine set off across the park to turn north along river ouzel, and on to Willen Lake, anticlockwise round the lake to the Pagoda. Up over the 'hill' and across to the canal – tea stop. Entertained by two pre-school kids sledging on a short slope and doing royal sideways grins at us as they passed (their mum was not sledging, just the pusher-off). Nobody left the group! Along the canal via park and bridleway paths to the finish. A good day despite the wait at the start.

Thursday Jan 27 The Northamptonshire Round part 1. Leader David Findel-Hawkins (with Merrian as back marker!)

As usual Dave's walk was well-planned and expertly led. We started from The Spread Eagle at Piddington and the walk was well attended there being about 20 of us. The day started by singing Happy Birthday to John, despite the walk being a celebration of Dave's 60th. We soon realised we were missing a regular member of the group, he will remain nameless but we will just say he lives in Luton and drives a Vauxhall Meriva! He had gone to the start of a previous walk! The weather was dull but cold and the ground still had the frost in it. We soon reached Salcey Forest and had a coffee break shortly after going under the M1, then came the first ploughed field but it did not trouble us as it was firm to walk on. We proceeded on to join the canal after the village of Ashton and walked along it into Stoke Bruern. Here we had lunch. I learned afterwards that the pub had a nice log fire but many of us sat beside the canal and had our picnics. Public toilets were a luxury. In the afternoon, we did encounter some muddy fields but once again they were firm. We walked through Roade before

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crossing back over the M1. During the afternoon apparently we walked across school land, but it was a public footpath so there was no cause for complaint. After a short tea break we got back to Stoke Bruern shortly after 3o'clock. A lovely walk, I can't wait for Part 2.

Thank you Dave.