

Media

During a recent enforced stay at home I had the fortune (misfortune) to be able to watch a repeat of Janet Street-Porter's Coast to Coast programs on television. For those of you who haven't seen it, She walks from Dungeness to Weston-super-Mare and then from Cardiff to Conway. These programs brought several points to mind.

The first one is that JSP must have been the person on whom all those jokes about women's navigational abilities were based. She seemed to almost permanently getting lost in some of the programs and shouldn't have been allowed anywhere without a guide. Even my good lady Morticia is not in the same class for getting lost. JSP will give walkers a bad name if she carries on like that. My experience has shown that most long distance walkers are also very good navigators and of those who aren't they are just as likely to be men as women. I can remember vividly a few years ago taking part in the Wealden Waters and there was a chap called Gerald who overtook me half a dozen times, but I never overtook him, unless you count the time he passed me going in the opposite direction. How he got to the finish I will never know. I can remember, a few years ago now, Ken Falconer did a very good article in Strider on navigating and using a compass. I would recommend it to both Gerald and JSP. Perhaps the editor would like to reprint it some time for our newer members.

The thing that spoiled these programs for me was how often they digressed from the walk. Did I really want to know that Weston-super-Mare has more charity shops per square mile than anywhere else, or to witness a discussion in Pontypool WMC on the rundown of local industry? Well, yes I might have done, but on Panorama, not in a program supposedly about a long distance walk. And did we really want to see the local line-dancing club in about 4 different places. I would much rather have seen a few more shots of the Mendips or the Brecon Beacons, both of which were covered in about two seconds flat. It is alright giving a brief history, or passing on some item of interest, of places the walk is passing, but lets leave it at that shall we.

I also began to think about how well walking is served by the media. In the past there were all the programs about Wainwright and his walks, which I enjoyed. I quite enjoyed the Wilderness Walks series as well. I can also remember Jimmy McGregor doing a couple of interesting series on the West Highland Way and the Southern Upland Way. But after that I am beginning to struggle to think of anything on the walking front which I enjoyed. True there are many "nature" programs which show off the countryside, but I would much rather be seeing our glorious countryside than watch the feeding and mating habits of the Lesser Dotted Walking Armadillo or some such beast.

I have seen some videos from W.H.Smith that cover various walks such as the Pennine Way and the South West Coast Path from the air. But whilst they were enjoyable from the scenery point of view, they were of little practical use to the walker. I have also seen a couple of very good videos on the Dales Way and the White Peak Way. I think they were by a company called Imago, but that's about all I know. So all in all, I think we are very poorly served by the mass media. We will have to rely on our "beloved" coffee-table guidebooks for a while to come.

As the man famous for funny walks said, "And now for something completely different". With the last issue of Strider came the usual supply of inserts. These normally get lost or thrown away immediately. Somebody should do a survey on how useful inserts are. This time one of them was brought to my attention. It was headed Peak Performance – Strength, Speed and Stamina for Walkers. It goes on to advertise a journal that will help you boost your performance and stay ahead of the competition!! WHAT COMPETITION? The LDWA is non-competitive. The leaflet goes on to offer a free sample of a wonder drug, well the leaflet calls it a legal supplement. I can't speak for others but I would like to ask are the LDWA now condoning taking performance enhancing "supplements". Is this the start of the slippery slope that leads to taking

performance-enhancing drugs? Will anybody in a challenge event who does a better time than last year have to take a drug test? Where will it all end? I assume the LDWA must be short of money (we all are aren't we) but I feel that a little more care is required in how we raise it. My only challenge is to get to the end of the walk, in the permitted time if a challenge event. The only training I do is to go for more walks. I don't want any supplements to make me go faster. That will lessen the enjoyment. And if you don't enjoy it, why do it?

You think this is silly. There is currently a campaign taking place to get chess recognised as a sport in this country. It already is in most other countries. Well a couple of countries, Italy and Spain I think, have included chess within their Olympic Federations. Now all tournaments that take place are supposed to test the prize winners for drugs. Off the top of my head, I can't think of any drug that would improve your performance at chess. We don't want this to occur in walking do we?

Well that's enough of my whinging for this time.

Hundreds

This year whilst on checkpoint duty at the Millennium Hundred, I met an old friend, also on duty, who I hadn't seen for a year or so. After he reads this, it might be ex-friend. Anyway this friend went and did something daft, but he said that as he had already appeared in one of my articles a few years ago, would I promise not to mention him or what he did in another article. Actually, he threatened to duff me up if I did but as he is 18 inches shorter and about 6 stones lighter than me I didn't take the threat too seriously. So I promised.

As a result of the "Man with No Name" doing the "Unmentionable", I got to thinking. This was my tenth hundred as supporter, walker, checkpointer and so on. Actually it was my 11th in 10 years as I was involved in two on the White Peak. So I thought I would just share a few memories of them with you. As I am suffering from old age, senility some would say, the brain cells are failing a bit so please accept my apologies if they are chronologically in the wrong order.

The first hundred I came across was the Lancaster. Here I was mainly a spectator whilst lending a bit of support to a couple of friends, Bob (and his mate Frank) and Richard. My abiding memories of the walk are of the red carpet laid out for walkers at the Brintons checkpoint (I think at Dunsop Bridge) and of sitting in the car watching a long string of lights ascending Pendle Hill. Very inspiring.

It actually inspired me enough to have a go at the Invicta 100. Memories – the heat, especially walking across the Medway bridge on the motorway at 8 a.m. with the temperature already in the 80's (nearly 30 for the younger brigade). I eventually gave up suffering from exhaustion and heat stroke. Cleveland came next with memories of walking with dear old Henry Bridge for some of it and the weather. Don't mention the weather.

Undaunted I returned to have a go at the Dartmoor. Again memories of the heat – this time the lack of it. I am sure the temperature reached freezing point on the first night, I know I couldn't stop my teeth chattering for a few miles at one point. The other incident I remember is rescuing a lamb from a leat. Well, the sweep team rescued it, I was too knackered to help. I spent the last 10 miles or so walking with a young lady called Kathy who was determined not to finish last, but she couldn't get away from me so we finished together, last equal. But being a gentleman, I let her register before me so her name would appear above mine in the result list.

Shropshire – the hills and the rain. I can still vividly remember trying to climb a hill on Offa's Dyke and could only get up it by pulling myself up on a wire fence at the side of the path. Yorkshire Dales – the hills

and the rain, and the rain, and the rain. It's funny how the weather seems to dominate many of my memories of 100's.

On Yorkshire, I walked with a young lady from the colonies for a while. I met her again after about 50 miles on the Downsman, just before the superb breakfast (lunch in my case) provided by Devon and Cornwall. Another memory I have of the Downsman happened a few weeks later, but the story isn't repeatable here. If you ever meet Morticia or my young friend Val, ask them about it. Neil was there too, but we won't include him.

Onto the White Peak. That more or less took a year out of my walking life. I spent six months writing the route description, checking it, revising it, and re-checking, with more than a little help from my friends. Then I swept the Marshals 100, helped Morticia operate Bonsall checkpoint, relieved the checkpoint staff at a couple of others as the last walker was 2 or 3 hours behind everyone else. And then I lost him on the Roaches. But he did turn up at the finish by taxi. The stepping stones in Chee Dale were under water a week before hand so I devised an alternative route if anybody wanted it. Same distance but a bit more climbing. Then some bright soul who shall remain nameless (but not the Man with No Name) told the drinks point just before that they were OK, so everybody went that way. But they weren't OK and I got a bit of stick about that.

On the main event, I looked after the sweepers, swept a bit myself, helped out at Bakewell with members of my club. General dogsbody in chief. A couple of disappointing memories on this, firstly young Val retiring at 94 miles despite all my offers (or maybe because of them). And my acquaintance from the colonies via Yorkshire and the Downsman managed to finish, but had got lost with half a mile to go and came in after the sweep team. Black mark for the chief sweeper.

Durham memories are tinged with sadness when Arnold collapsed and died just in front of me soon after the start. I also get nightmares about crossing the bog soon after Bowes, but manage to raise a smile at the thought of Ginger paddling barefoot in the stream with a couple of miles to go.

And on to the Millennium. And back to my favourite topic, the weather. It wasn't as bad as Yorkshire, but the conditions underfoot were worse. I was on checkpoint duty at 90 miles, so most of you were too far gone at that point to see who was there, especially those who arrived after we had the power failure. But before I went on duty, I toured some of the other checkpoints, visiting long time acquaintances at the Norfolk and Devon checkpoints. We had a bit of fun just before the Norfolk checkpoint. We found a tree blocking the road to the checkpoint and couldn't get through. Myself, Morticia and young John tried manfully (womanfully, personfully) to shift it with no success. Fortunately 2 or 3 more carloads of supporters arrived also trying to get to the checkpoint and between us we managed to move the tree so we could get through. One final memory, if you meet Gerald (remember him from one of my previous articles) ask him what happened at the finish.

So those are just a few fleeting memories from 10 years of hundreds. Everybody will have their own of course so I hope I haven't bored you too much with mine. A bit like holiday photos I think. There is a rich vein of memories of 100's waiting to be tapped and it might make an interesting book for someone to write and the rest of us to read.

Obstacles

I was rambling along a footpath, as we plodders do from time to time, when suddenly the footpath disappeared. Not into a field where a hostile farmer had ploughed up the path or into heather where the line

of the path was not visible, this path disappeared over the edge of a quarry. Now this was a path I had been walking on and off for the best part of 40 years and I didn't recall walking over the edge of a quarry previously. It turned out to be a case of familiarity breeds contempt, or maybe pride goes before a fall in this case. Having walked this path so often, I was daydreaming and missed/ignored the footpath diversion signs.

This obstacle had an air of finality about it. There was no chance it was going to get out of my way. A lot of obstacles of the animal kind do move out of the way when you approach them, fortunately for me. I am always a bit wary of 4 legged beasts that you meet on walks as most of them are bigger and/or heavier than me and those that aren't usually have sharp teeth or claws. I can remember one walk in Somerset a few years ago when I was beset by animal "obstacles" from start to finish. But I survived.

A lot of the obstacles encountered on walks are man-made (or should that be person-made these days). No doubt we have all encountered the padlocked gate and the barbed wire stile on our walks. A friend of mine (a former scout leader, not a member of the LDWA) always carried a pair of wire-cutters on his walks for this reason. Electric fences are also dangerous obstacles. This is especially so on walks with evening and night time stretches. Even if they are not live, electric fences can still be dangerous in the dark.

Another man-made obstacle is roads. I don't mean your quiet country lane, they can be quite pleasant to walk along. But a lot of footpaths have been crossed by new bypasses and dual carriageways. The walker now has to cross these roads without the help of footbridges or subways. Has anybody tried crossing the A14 recently? I have, twice in one day. If it is excitement, thrills and danger that you want, don't bother going to Alton Towers. Just try walking across the A14. That can provide you with all the excitement and adventure that you want for one day. Though walking on public paths across Army land when they are doing gunnery and target practice comes a pretty close second.

Nature throws up its own obstacles as well, at least on the walks I go on. On one challenge walk I participated in, it rained so much and for so long that one of the self-clip points finished up in the middle of a 3 feet deep fast flowing stream instead of at the side of a gentle 6 inch wide brook. I seem to recall that only 1 of the 100 walkers actually clipped at this point. Another time, I was the first walker to reach a stile to find a tree fallen across it. Just in case you are wondering why I was the first, it was a walk where you could start at any time between 7 and 11, and I just happened to start before anybody else. Anyway, it took a lot of hacking/scrambling to get through and over this tree and stile. Those who started later probably found it a lot easier as us mugs who started early would have cleared a way for them.

Now there are other obstacles that are beyond the control of walk organisers and nature. There are some walkers I know who are just unable to pass a pub, mentioning no names of course. We don't want the LDWA to get the reputation of being full of alcoholics, even if it is. My problem is not pubs, but with checkpoints, I get comfortable and don't want to leave. Some walk organisers have learnt this, and knowing I will be last, have already dismantled the checkpoint before I get there. So all I get is my tally clipped and a cup of squash, either stood up or sat on a convenient if somewhat uncomfortable wall. It doesn't encourage you to stay long. I can remember 30 years or so ago, football also used to be an obstacle. Not the Sunday afternoon match on telly. On social walks, when we arrived at the start of the walk, we got the football out and had a kick-about whilst waiting for the others to arrive. Six hours later we would still be there, the latecomers having joined in the game of football rather than the early birds starting the walk. What memories.

Finally there are the natural obstacles. Now anybody who knows me knows that a climb of more than fifteen feet represents an obstacle to me. Then there was a path I was following in Warwickshire once. It went straight up to a small lake and ended there. Apparently, it continued on the other side, but there was no way around. Alright if you could swim and fancied a swim, but I didn't. I retraced my steps and found another way.

Of course, for most of us there is one obstacle that is much bigger than any of the others. Mine is called Morticia. “You’re not going walking again” is the oft-heard plaintive cry. “What about the gardening/decorating/shopping/visitors?” or any combination of them. The tricks I get up to so that I can escape to my beloved tracks in the country. But that is another story for another day.

Keep on plodding and may all your walks be long ones. Just remember, there is no obstacle that can’t be circumvented given a big enough supply of time, money and energy.

What is a LDW

When I wrote my last article, little did I realise that very soon there would be an even bigger obstacle in the path of my walking, namely the foot and mouth crisis. It severely curtailed my activities and no doubt most of yours as well. So I looked for alternatives. A couple of friends of mine from Bristol were due to be doing a sponsored walk from Dungeness to Cape Wrath, but have had to postpone it because of the epidemic. Lets hope normality will return as soon as possible.

I tried walking along the roads, but it wasn’t all that enjoyable. I kept meeting all these runners training for the London Marathon, or something similar. I used to have this knack of upsetting by telling them that I did London twice myself in the eighties, along with a couple of dozen others, but gave up running marathons because they were too easy, there wasn’t enough challenge in them after a while. I returned to long distance walking and now you are all lumbered with me. Just in case you are wondering, yes I finished towards the back of marathons as well.

Which leads me on to the question, when is a long distance walker a long distance walker? The question is prompted by some pieces in the last couple of issues of Strider. In one of them there was an event report with a couple of pictures. I have done the event and know the route. One picture showed “walkers” approaching a checkpoint at about 35 miles in daylight, which meant about 7 hours “walking”. The second picture showed a walker at the 30 mile checkpoint in darkness wearing head torch and so on. The first picture was obviously of runners, but to get it published, our beloved editor probably had to be conned into thinking they were walkers.

This was followed up in the next magazine by 7 pages of listings of people who climbed various mountains in various places at various times. Those of you who know me will know that I am not fond of climbing hills. I would much rather go for a 40 mile stroll along the Cleveland Way than climb some obscure peak just because it is on some list or other and has to be done to tick it off. The best reason I can think of for getting to the top of a hill is that it normally provides a natural place to stop for a cup of coffee. One of lists I noticed had 106 names on it in 50 years. Assuming all the completions were members of the LDWA, that is 0.5% of all the members the LDWA have had in that time. Hardly mass appeal I would have thought.

Don’t get me wrong. I have nothing against runners or peakbaggers. They are just as crazy in their way as I am in mine. But their activities are not long distance walking and as such shouldn’t be included or encouraged in Strider. Let them form their own associations and organize their own magazines. To my way of thinking, we are in danger of letting the LDWA become all things to all men. What is the logical conclusion. Let in all outdoor types, invite in the rock-climbers and potholers (does potholing count as outdoors?). Which brings me back to my original question. When is a long distance walker a long distance walker. Nobody has yet given me a definite definition of what a long distance walk is, but I do know what a walker is. It is not running, and whilst it may climb some hills, it is not a competition to climb as many hills as possible.

I occasionally get asked if I ever feel ashamed because I am always at the back of an event and make the checkpoint staff wait around for me. The answer is no, if I am within the time limit, because then they are only working what they volunteered to work. If I am not, then I will apologize for being late. But there are some groups, Cornwall and Devon readily come to mind, who make you welcome no matter how late you are. Then they throw you out. But if you look at things from my end of the event, then I would say it was the runners who ought to feel ashamed for making the checkpoint staff open earlier than they needed to have done. For those of you who remember the Manifold Marathon from a previous story, the Hector Hill clipper point has become mine and mine alone. This year, the first runner came through, then forty minutes later, the second runner came. Another twenty minutes wait for the third and then another 75 participants came through in the next two hours. If it hadn't been for the runners, I could have got there an hour later and had an hour less standing around on a very cold and windy day. Typical June weather. But did I complain. Of course I didn't, at least not in public. Morticia probably caught it full blast when I got home.

I have had experiences whilst I have been marshalling when runners have arrived at a checkpoint before its official opening time and they have played merry hell because we wouldn't let them through. I think there is some discrimination there. That is one rule for the runner and one for the walker. Unfair I say. The rules should say if you arrive outside the official opening hours of the checkpoint (early or late) you will be retired. Now which is going to be the first event to do that.

So the moral of my tale is, go and do your own thing, in an organization suitable for whatever your thing is, and let us get the LDWA back to its roots, an organization for long distance walkers.

Walking Phenomena

On the Road to Mandalay, or any other remote place that you care to think of, there is one thing you can almost guarantee. That is that somebody will stop and ask the way to Rose Cottage or Dove Farm or something like that. Then they will get upset when you tell them that you haven't got a clue. I don't know why but it always seems to happen to me when I am hundreds of miles from home and haven't a clue where anywhere is except the places on the route that I am walking, and even then not many of them. The walking equivalent of Murphy's law I presume.

This is one of the phenomena I find when I am out walking. It doesn't always manifest itself when I am walking, but is a regular occurrence. There are a few other "happenings" that I would put in the same category.

How many of you have experienced Walkers Wind (not the flatulent kind from eating too many crisps). We have all at one time or another done a 20 mile circular walk with the wind directly into your face the whole way. That is the Walkers Wind I mean. Funnily enough, it never seems to be behind you for 20 miles. Whilst on the subject of wind, no doubt you have all been in the situation when you have been walking for a couple of hours on your own and you need a call of nature, it is a cast iron certainty that there will now be a never-ending stream of walkers passing you.

Another circumstance that has affected us all to some degree is the Adverse Weather Follows Us Locally, otherwise known as AWFUL. You know the one. You do a walk in what you would consider lousy weather and your friend who finished an hour ahead or behind says what a lovely day it has been. This circumstance has different manifestations for different people. To me, AWFUL is rain, rain and more rain with temperatures in the 30's (sorry, showing my age, I mean 0's). To some other people it is sun, sun and more sun with temperatures in the 100's (sorry, showing my age, I mean 30's). I blame Ming the Merciless for the problems.

Then there is the Walkers Hill syndrome. Another one I suffer from regularly. You do a 25 mile challenge walk, going uphill all the way, yet you still manage to finish back at the point you started from. A slight variation on this comes in a couple of walks I have done in the Dales, where you spend 3 miles climbing to the top of a ridge or hill or mountain, then drop down steeply for half a mile so that you are back at the level you started from. Then you start to climb for another 3 miles. And so on.

Hypochondriacs Affliction is a problem that I have heard about, but never suffered from myself. This occurs in some people who arrive at the start of an event feeling 110% fit and raring to go, but then within half-a-mile their knees ache, or they have a snuffle coming on, or some other minor ailment. They then spend the next twenty-four and a half miles wondering whether they can make it to the finish and telling everybody within earshot all their problems.

Another disease I do suffer from is Route Choice Deficiency. This occurs on events where you are just given a list of checkpoints and you have to find your own route from one to another. In most cases there is an obvious route, so no problem. But occasionally you have a choice of two or three different ways. Invariably the one I choose will be the most boggy, swampy morass, where the footpath disappears when you are in the middle of nowhere and this route will take twice as long as the alternatives. Anybody walking with me on one of these events should always take a different route to me, and they shouldn't persuade me to go with them. That is only asking for trouble. Some scientists believe this is a form of BCD (Brain Cell Deficiency), a disease which all long distance walkers suffer from, but this link is unproven as yet.

During the past year or two, I have also come to the conclusion that I am magnetic, and I am not talking about my personality. More and more walkers seem to be carrying ski-poles recently and these ski-poles seem to be attracted to various parts of my anatomy. So a couple of words of warning based on my personal experiences. Don't get too close to a ladder-stile when somebody carrying a ski-pole is climbing over it. You may get a smack in the mouth from it. And don't get too close to somebody with a pole stuck in the top of their rucksack, you may get another smack in the mouth if they swing round too quickly.

Given all the trials and tribulations I suffer, you may well ask why do I do it. There are several reasons. Firstly, I am probably an adrenalin freak or something like that. The buzz I get from finishing an event despite everything is tremendous. Also, it gets me out of going shopping with Morticia. Finally, I suffer from BCD, or hadn't you noticed. Or as Morticia so nicely puts it, I must be daft.

Styles of Stiles

For those of you old enough to remember him, I am not going to talk about Nobby Stiles and his style of football.

I can remember several years ago a friend of mine, yes I do have some strange as it may seem, had a theory that the number of stiles you encountered on a walk directly related to how knackered you felt. The more tired you were, the more stiles you had to cross. I would add to that the more tired you are, the harder they are to cross. It seems to me that as I struggle to the top of a hill, just before the summit I always seem to find a ten-foot high ladder stile with half the rungs missing. Perhaps it is just a three-foot high stile that just seems like ten feet in my exhaustion.

One great advantage of stiles, apart from getting you across obstacles, is they give you the chance of getting your breath back. If you are in a large group, try to get over first or last (unlike the ROGER rule for gates). This gives you the chance to catch your breath whilst everybody else is crossing. This is especially true of ladder stiles. If you are on your own, then the top of a ladder stile normally provides a good seat for a couple of minutes scenery viewing whilst breathing returns to something approaching normality.

There are many different styles of stile, ladder stiles, stone stiles, simple wooden bars that have to be climbed over, squeeze stiles. The variation is almost endless. In recent years there has also been a proliferation of “doggy” stiles to allow pets to get from one field to another more easily, whilst their owners probably have to climb over a “dodgy” stile. I have also noticed that not all the stiles on these footpaths have doggy stiles. Are the dogs supposed to try and get over the walkers stiles, or just sit there and wait for their owner to return. The mind boggles at the thought of all those dogs sat beside various stiles.

Ladder stiles come in all shapes and sizes. There are some that are just a series of wooden bars up one side of a wall and down the other side. There are others that if they were more well known could win international awards for architecture. The biggest problem I have come across on ladder stiles is what do I do with my walking stick. I have on occasions managed to thump my companions with it whilst crossing a ladder stile. I have also been thumped by them, so honours are even there. It was suggested that I throw the stick over first. I tried that and still managed to hit somebody. On another walk when I did that, the stick landed in the middle of a large deep pool of mud/slurry, a lot of which was inside my boots by the time I had retrieved it. Suggestions please (polite ones of course as this is a family magazine). For some reason on the walks I do, herds of cattle seem to congregate around stiles leaving a 20 feet radius of mud and slurry on the other side. Is it just me that the cows have it in for or do other walkers suffer as well.

Stone stiles are quite prevalent where I normally go walking. These too can vary quite considerably. Some consist of dirty great concrete blocks pushed through the wall that you are attempting to negotiate whilst others are just slightly larger stones sticking out of the wall, which you may need a magnifying glass to identify. In the later stages of a walk, these can sometimes resemble the North Face of the Eiger, but that is probably me hallucinating again.

The stiles that are simple wooden bars can some times be the most difficult to get over. Depending on how recent the maintenance was, there is always some degree of rickitiness. To come back to my favourite area for examples, the 100's, I seem to remember one at about 70 miles on the Invicta that swayed so much whilst you were on top of it that it almost made me feel sea-sick.

Squeeze stiles for those who don't know them are usually two upright slabs of stone that you have to squeeze between. In theory they should be the easiest to negotiate, but given the middle-age spread I have acquired over the years, even these can prove difficult to me. On similar lines, I have problems with kissing gates as well. No problems with getting into them, but I always seem to get jammed half way through and need assistance to be pulled or pushed the rest of the way. Maybe I ought to take Morticia's advice and go on a diet.

It is interesting to note that even at the beginning of walks, stiles are regarded as an obstacle, not as an aid to cross another obstacle that would be difficult if not impossible without a stile. Of course, some stiles are superfluous. I can remember one walk (not a 100 for a change) where we came to a squeeze stile in what was once a dry stone wall. The wall had long since been demolished, but for some reason the stone slabs of the squeeze stile had been left standing. Most of us just walked around it, but Simon and Doug insisted on going through it, saying that the rest of us had cheated by not following the correct path. Their insanity must rival mine.

One can but wonder on the future of the stile with the coming of Freedom to Roam. Will they fall into dis-use as people just wander where they want to and cross obstacles any way they can. We will have to wait and see.

Unloved

It has come to my attention that some people don't like me. I don't mean the group of drunks who beat me up a year or two back, but participants, officials and spectators at various events I have taken part in. And also some members of organisations I belong to.

I have been thumped, kicked and pushed at many events. I don't think the perpetrators mean to do it, but I do wonder sometimes. You have no doubt all been in the situation when the person in front has let a branch go and it has clonked you. Of course he or she says sorry, but he does it with a big grin on their face. That is if they are not rolling around splitting their sides with laughter. I have mentioned in the past about being hit by walking sticks etc when climbing stiles so we won't dwell on that this time. Then there is all the jostling for position that goes on at the start of an event. For those of you who have never been at the back, there is often just as much jostling there as at the front. Almost as if it is some kind of honour to be the last to start. I just smile to myself and let them get on with it. I know that the honour really is to be the last to finish and that is my honour.

Some people deliberately go out of their way to avoid me. Doing my lonely vigil on top of Hector Hill a couple of years ago, the sweeper arrived and we discovered that there were three walkers missing. A quick phone call to the finish revealed that these three had already finished. I can only surmise that they knew I would be there and made a detour to avoid me as I had upset them at one time or another. On the other hand they could have just got lost, but life's not that simple, is it. They had already gone home when I got back to the finish, so I couldn't ask them.

Somebody once wrote that they thought I was sad. I admit it. I am sad, but I claim diminished responsibility. It comes as a result of the personality by-pass operation I had a few years ago. Apologies to Bob Monkhouse for pinching one of his jokes, but he probably pinched it from someone else. Those of you who know me know that I have a few eccentricities / foibles / phobias (take your pick depending on your own opinion). I hate / dislike / disagree with "cheats". I hate / dislike / disagree with walkers in running events and runners in walking events. I hate / dislike / disagree with "litter louts". Again, take your pick depending on your opinion of me and the subject.

One subject I haven't aired recently is the subject of litter louts. I realise that a lot of the rubbish you see on walks is left there by farmers such as old tractors and other pieces of farm equipment. Can an old tractor be described as litter. The jury is out on that one. I know there is nothing I can do about that as it is their land and they can more or less do what they like on it. A lot of rubbish emanates from tourists as well. This seems to increase or decrease in proportion to the distance to or from a public car park. Now there isn't much I can do about that either, but the authorities could if they were so inclined by tougher enforcement of the litter laws.

The people who really upset me are the true walkers who leave their rubbish in the middle of nowhere. Just recently I walked some of the West Highland Way with my son, and believe me, parts of that really are in the middle of nowhere. Anyway, there we were walking along and we came across the remains of a trainer that had fallen to bits and been discarded by its owner. What happened to the other half of the pair I don't know.

I don't object (well, not too much) to the bio-degradable litter such as apple cores and banana skins. Please correct my mis-information if these are not bio-degradable. However, if you keep your eyes open it is amazing what you see, mineral water bottles and beer cans seem to be the most common, closely followed by Mars wrappers and crisp packets. Unfortunately they always seem to be empty when I come across them. These were all found in such remote places that it can only be the true long distance walker that left them. And these are the people who should know better. Of course you could argue that members of the LDWA would never do such a thing, but I am sure those of you who have done 100's will have seen the odd torch

battery lying around in the middle of the route. So in future, please take your litter home with you, or at least carry it until you find a waste bin.

So, I may be unloved, but there are some of you out there who are unloved by me. The problem is, you know who I am but I don't know who you are, but I shall be looking out for you.

Talking of batteries, here is a little poser. The rules for 100's and other overnight events usually state, quite sensibly, that entrants should carry a torch and also spare bulb and batteries. Now if you have to change your bulb and / or batteries half way through the night section, you now no longer have any spares. Does this mean you are now breaking the rules and should be disqualified? Answers on the back of a £10 note to me please. I have seen some very funny rules on walks in my time, but that is another story.

Baggers

There was an old man called Heath
Who nearly had trouble with his teeth

I will let you make the rest of the limerick up whilst I tell you the story. For those of you who remember about 10 years ago, before I obtained the exalted and lucrative post of Backmarker, I used to submit articles about the gang of 7. One of these was the man with no name who did the unmentionable on the Kent 100. Another was Heath. He was always a bit of a wimp and dropped out of circulation about 5 or 6 years ago.

Recently I was checkpointing on an event which had 2 routes, a short 26 and a long 33 mile. Needless to say I was on the long one, near the end. Anyway, unknown to me, Heath had re-entered the fold and entered the event. As usual though, he wimped out and did the short route and so avoided my checkpoint. I didn't actually meet him until I arrived back at the finish. Then he picked up where he had left off, making disparaging comments about me and my ability or lack of. Then he said the editor had got it wrong and my column should be called Ramblings of a Plo.er. Now as you all know, disparaging comments mean nothing to me. I would have packed up Backmarker years ago if they did. But I couldn't have Heath maligning the editor, so I offered to re-arrange his teeth for him without the hassle of him having to visit the dentist. Sadly he turned my offer down.

Now you may be wondering about the title. No, this isn't a mis-spelling either. On the aforementioned event, my checkpoint (clipper point might be a better description) was just past the top of a hill, but the route didn't go over the "summit". In one of the many lulls, (2 runners and 50 walkers in 5 hours didn't mean I was over-worked), I noticed a walker up at the trig point on the "summit" who seemed to be writing various notes. Then he came down to the checkpoint and I discovered that he was actually an entrant. On chatting to him, I discovered he was a trig-point bagger. He had gone off the course just to bag the trig point before coming down to the checkpoint. I was so intrigued by this that I forgot to disqualify for deliberating not following the route. You don't think I would have disqualified him, well you can make up your own mind on that point.

There were 5 other entrants who came over the summit as well. The first one was having difficulty reading the route description. The other 4 were two hundred yards behind him and weren't even reading the route description. They were just following the man in front. Another lesson to be learnt there. Even if you are with or following someone, always make sure you know where you are on the route description.

Anyway, trig-point bagging was a new one on me. Are there any more kindred spirits out there or is he in a minority of one as I seem to be with my trail bagging. I for one am interested. For instance, how many trig points are there in the U.K.? How many do you have to bag to be considered an expert? There's a few bits of

information for somebody to find out. If there is enough (any?) interest, then we could publish the findings. I call myself a trail bagger, but that may be a bit of a misnomer. I am more of a trail mile bagger. I have walked a few miles on a lot of trails, but not completed very many. I seem to collect trail miles the way other people collect air miles.

But trig-point bagging is a new category to add to the reason why people go walking, along with peak bagging, which includes sub-categories of Munro bagging and Wainwright bagging and anybody else bagging, county top bagging, railway path bagging and canal bagging. All of these I have met supporters of. Are there any more different types of baggers out there?

I have said many times that I don't like going uphill. Lazy, that's what I am, or so Morticia keeps telling me. So maybe there is a secret society of county bottom baggers that I could join. These will be people who have the ambition to walk to the lowest point in each county. That would appeal to me. Of course there would have to be some sort of rule that says the point must be at least 5 miles from the coast, otherwise you could clear a lot off by just visiting the seaside in a significant number of counties. And of course it would have to be on dry land. There would be no point in trying to bag the county bottom of Cumbria if it was deemed to be the bottom of Coniston lake.

Again, as a bit of something slightly different, what is the greatest number of counties you can walk a bit of in one day. Near us is a point called Three Shires Head where Derbyshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire all meet. So there is 3 to start with. It wouldn't be difficult for the average member of the LDWA to add Yorkshire or Greater Manchester but you would have to be really fit to include both on the same walk. Any other offers?

And then there may even be people who go walking just for the fun of it. Though come to think of it, where's the fun in it when you are lost on top of Kinder Scout in pouring rain with visibility down to 2 yards. We all need a challenge of some sort, even if we don't admit it. Perhaps we should just call these people non-baggers.

Professional Whinger

Everybody thinks I have a few hobby horses and I use this column to make political capital out of them. Well I may do, if I knew what it meant. But I am sure the editor would gladly let other people have a regular column if they want to express their own views. But I claim the back page. You can be Middle of the Road in the centre of the magazine or something. Some people even think I am sad. Well that I deny, it is just my peculiar sense of humour which does confuse people on occasions. It comes from being a Monty Python fan in my younger days.

As an example, a while ago I was on a challenge walk and talking to another walker whom I knew. It must have been near the start of the walk for me still to have someone to talk to. He asked me what I was doing in the next few weeks. I said the following week I was doing the Amberley Amble, the week after I was on the Rugby Romp, following that was the Taunton Trot and the week after that I was in the divorce court. Well you all know how much Morticia hates walking. Anyway, you can imagine my surprise when at the end of the walk, another walker came up to me and offered me his condolences, saying how sorry he was to hear that myself and Morticia had split up. He thought we were such a nice couple. My two companions fell about laughing, so I had to put him right.

Morticia and I have been together for so long now, well over half a lifetime, that I couldn't live without her. Anybody who has ever tasted my cooking will know why. It is amazing how much food is left over at the checkpoints I man on some walks. Talking of half a lifetime, I am coming up to a milestone and have been

wondering how to celebrate it. A work colleague about 20 years ago decided to run 50 marathons in the year leading up to his 50th birthday, the last one being on his birthday. He managed it, but only by doing 2 marathons in a weekend on a couple of occasions. And you think I am mad? Then there were those amongst the LDWA fraternity that walked 2000 miles to celebrate the year 2000. A lot succeeded, congratulations to them. Anyway, my current thoughts are to do 60 at 60, i.e. to walk 60 miles on my 60th birthday. I hasten to stress that it is only a thought at present and probably won't progress beyond that, but I am thinking about it. I am thinking about where to do it, how to do it, and also, why should I do it. Well the best reason I have come up with so far is that it would get me out of some domestic chores. It is a strange way to avoid gardening etc, so if anybody knows a better way of getting out of it I would be grateful if they would let me know.

60 at 60. Even the thought of it makes me feel knackered. I find that I always seem to get tired towards the end of a walk. I don't know if it is just me or do other people have that problem? On a 10 mile walk, I get tired after 8 miles. On a 20 mile walk, I get tired at 18 miles. On a 30 mile walk, I get tired at 25 miles. On a 100 mile walk, I still get tired at 25 miles but that is a different story because I used to feel great at 95 miles. Is it psychological, or psychiatric, or even psychedelic? Do other people suffer the same way? Will this be the start of a whole new debate, or will nobody even care. Perhaps we could get Government funding to investigate it.

Recently, I allowed my car to be used as the body wagon on a challenge walk. With me being the driver of course. It is much easier to do a challenge walk in a car than on your feet. A bit boring though. I think it was Brian Hanrahan who made the famous quote during the Falklands War "I counted them out and I counted them back". It was a bit like that on the body wagon duty at each checkpoint. Ah here comes the guy with the bunny rabbit on his jumper, only 11 more to come after him. And so on. Only 5 people needed transporting that day, 2 were injured (so they said but I have my doubts about 1 of them) and 3 were worn out. The one I remember is a chap who came in to the last checkpoint almost dead on his feet. There were already 2 people waiting to be transported back to the finish at that checkpoint. The marshals tried to persuade this guy to retire but he wouldn't and eventually carried on. I took the other 2 back to the finish and told the checkpoint staff that I would come back and help take the stuff back to headquarters. Surprise surprise, when I got back to the checkpoint the dead on his feet walker was there waiting for transport. He had got a quarter mile down the road and decided he had had enough and went back to the checkpoint. Should the marshal's have forcibly retired him? I leave you to make your own mind up.

Another name I have been called in the past is Professional Whinger, PW for short. My excuse is that I am just airing topics that nobody else knew existed. Well that is enough of my whinging for this time.



Friends and acquaintances at Bakewell at the start of Roger's 60 at 60 walk.

Publicity

An oft cited quotation is "Golf is a good walk ruined". Now it is a few years since I played a round of golf, but I can vividly remember that I used to get in lot wilder places on the golf courses than I ever did on some of my walks. My shots used to be that wayward that I never bothered with the fairways. If there are many more golfers like me around, then golf clubs might be a good place to send publicity leaflets for the LDWA.

Talking about publicity, we aren't very good at publicising ourselves. This is not meant as a criticism of the committee of the LDWA, I am talking about the average member. I make a living by selling stamps. Not the sort you buy at the Post Office, well not for the last 50 years anyway, but the kind stamp collectors are interested in. One of the ways I do this is by attending philatelic exhibitions around the country. Some time ago I was at an exhibition wearing one of my many LDWA event sweatshirts when one of my customers asked if I was a member. It turned out he was one as well. We had known each other for many years and neither knew of the other ones interests outside of what we thought was our common one – stamps. How many of you have had similar experiences? So make a resolution, publicise the LDWA more. Wear your sweatshirts or t-shirts to social gatherings, wear them to work on dress-down days or anything like that. Let the world, or at least your neck of it, know of the existence of the LDWA.

If it is the case that the membership is getting older, then maybe most of you don't work and can't wear LDWA shirts on dress-down days. I haven't got a grudge against oldies, being a trainee one myself, but maybe some of the publicity could be aimed at the younger brigade.

Personally, I blame modern culture for the lack of the younger element on events. When I was a lad, I got hooked on walking in the scouts, going on midnight hikes, doing two day jaunts over the Three Peaks and that sort of thing. Not Snowdon, Scafell Pike and Ben Nevis, which seems to be the modern version, but Ingleborough, Whernside and Pen-y-Ghent. None of the luxury of driving between the peaks either, you had to do it all on Shanks' Pony. In my area there seems to be a shortage of scouts, possibly because of a shortage of volunteers to run the troops, but more likely because of the computer game/television culture that seems to grip modern youth. I fear for the future, not only of the LDWA but of all sorts of "voluntary" organisations.

Talking of the Three Peaks, there was a challenge called the Six Peaks which added Buckden Pike, Great Whernside and Little Whernside to the three already mentioned. A tough challenge for lads of fifteen and sixteen. I have no idea, but I would guess that it was from this that the Fellsman Hike evolved. Now that is a tough event for the oldies, never mind the youngsters. This years 100 takes place in the same area. Speaking from experience of the area, I would warn participants not to take it too lightly. Those of you who were on the Yorkshire Dales 100 will remember how wet it can be.

I won't be taking part in the 100 this year (loud sighs of relief from the organising committee) because of business commitments, although I expect to be there some of the time. Because of this, I was thinking of resurrecting my campaign of a few years ago for "Anytime" 100's. These would be the 100 route, but can be walked anytime the participant wants to, over 5 or 6 days if they so wish. It had a couple of people interested then, but maybe with new members there may be some more. As the Yorkshire Dales is one of my favourite areas, I would enjoy the prospect of walking the 100, even if not on the actual event.

Why do people go walking in the areas they do? As I said, the Yorkshire Dales are one of my favourite areas. I go walking to get away from the crowds, not to join in with them, so I don't go to the Lake District or Snowdonia these days. It has nothing to do with the fact that they are full of hills, which everybody knows I don't like, but the fact that they are full of people. I go to places like the North York Moors, Long Mynd and the Southern Uplands of Scotland. There I can get some peace and quiet and really enjoy myself. Other people may enjoy the hustle and bustle of the Lake District and that is their prerogative. I think they are all mad, but probably they all think I am mad. Insanity is probably the only criteria that is requisite in being a member of the LDWA.

Now come to think of it, that's another place we could publicise the LDWA.

Paths of Glory

In the last edition of Strider there was a picture of the new Hadrian's Wall footpath with a caption to the effect that the writer wondered how long it would stay green. I can understand that sentiment. I have been in a few places recently where the erosion has been terrible. Perhaps I am partly to blame by encouraging people to get out onto the LDP's more often. But then I think, nobody has ever listened to me before so why should they start now.

To my way of thinking, the Pennine Way is a classic example. Parts of the southern end got so eroded they have had to pave parts of it and put in diversions on other parts. There are also a couple of sections in

Yorkshire which the last time I walked them they were so badly eroded it looked as if they had been holding four wheel drive trials on them. That was after the tanks had been through.

I have been out on the Pennine Way recently filling in a couple of gaps between Thornton-in-Craven and Malham Tarn. There I found the exact opposite in some places. You couldn't find the route on the ground, going across fields. There were a couple of points where we actually followed sheep tracks and finished up in the wrong place. One of them just went to a water trough. We even came to one place where there was a wire fence across the path. I suppose I had always assumed that the Pennine Way was so popular that you didn't need a map or route instructions, you just followed the footsteps of the million people who had done it before you. Wrong again.

With regard to fences across public footpaths, an old friend of mine runs the local cub pack (or whatever they are called these days). When he takes them out on their 5 mile hikes, he always takes some wire cutters with him just in case he comes across one of these fences across a path. Is any event organizer thinking of adding wire cutters to the list of required kit on an event? Always being at the back, I would argue that I don't need them as somebody in front of me would have cleared the way before I got there.

Incidentally, my companion of these Pennine Way trips was arguing about how much of the trail I could claim to have completed. You see, when I started walking the Pennine Way in the 60's the M62 hadn't been built and I gather the route has changed somewhat since. Does my original route still count? Also, I have done the alternative route through Bowes, not the official route bypassing it. But I had done both the official and alternative routes out of Edale, so switching them around made no difference.

I have been going on about the Pennine Way, but the same principles apply to most if not all the National Trails. They all seem to be suffering from erosion in some places and not much use in others. As you all know I am a fan of the National Trails and I much prefer collecting miles on these than climbing Munros or Wainwrights or Nuttalls. This is true Long Distance walking, leading up to the ultimate challenge in this country – LEJOG. Mind you, if they add a few more sections to the South West Coast Path, then that could become almost as long and tough. I doubt if I will ever do LEJOG, or JOGLE, but I have great admiration and envy for those of you that do.

I keep collecting odd miles on the National Trails, but the only ones I have actually completed are the South Downs Way and the West Highland Way. I have done most of the Cleveland Way and something ranging from a few miles to half the trail on the rest. Possibly with the exception of the aforementioned Hadrian's Wall Path which I have been told is now designated a National Trail, but I haven't even done a few yards on it. I think completing the National Trails is a much more natural challenge for a member of the LDWA than the completion of all the Munros or whatever list of peaks you are trying to complete.

Think of the glory you would receive if you become the first person to walk all the National Trails. Not much probably as the current culture climate amongst LDWA members seems to think more of those who climb up less than 1 mile than those who walk along 10 miles. But I am sure there are supporters out there, but like the Catholics in medieval times they choose to remain hidden so they are not persecuted for their beliefs. But have faith, our time will come. You will be allowed to say that you like long distance walking without fear of ridicule, persecution or discrimination.

For those hill-climbers and peakbaggers out there who are thinking "What is this drivel he is going on about". Beware, the time of the long distance walker is coming, and it may be closer than you think. Falling numbers of entries for 100's and certain other events have led the peakbagger brigade to claim impending victory over the trail walking fraternity. But my followers are just lulling them into a false sense of security. Long distance walking will make a comeback and my followers and I will be leading the revolution. Just a minute, if I am a backmarker how many people are following me?

Just in case you are wondering, I haven't been at the whisky bottle either. Honest. Hic. Hic.

Navigating

Recently Morticia had one of her purges and insisted that I tidy my office up. So as you know I do anything for a quiet life, I started to do it. However I hadn't got very far when I found a couple of old (1991) Striders and naturally I got distracted and started to read them. In one of them Ken Falconer wrote an article on how to use a compass, something all members of the LDWA should be aware of. I don't propose to repeat it, but it did strike me that an article on how to navigate wouldn't go amiss. Well this is not it, I will leave that to people better qualified than I am to do it. I will just pass on a few tips that I have learnt to my advantage.

Good navigation skills, whether you are walking in the Peak District, Dartmoor, The Yorkshire Dales or Long Mynd can reveal whole new areas of the countryside allowing the average walker to leave the relative safety of the tourist paths and explore. Of course, there are some walkers I know who have difficulty finding their way to the start of a walk and that is just the beginning of their problems.

With no navigational skills the countryside can rapidly become a very dangerous place - a place where fatalities are not unknown. I have great admiration for the Mountain Rescue teams and the Air/Sea Rescue people although I have never used them myself. But the fewer occasions they need to be called out the better.

There is something to remember though. Don't leave navigation to others (except those people just mentioned who have problems anyway) - even the most confident and able people make mistakes. If you get left behind by the person who was navigating, then you still need to know where you are, and where you are in the route description if you are following one. If you do get lost, it usually isn't disastrous if you realise quickly and can retrace your steps or find a reasonable route back to your proper course. A friend of mine uses a GPS, which when he gets lost is very good at telling him where he is, but not how to get to where he should be. So a skill worth practicing is to learn how to read the countryside from a map.

A few points worth remembering. When following a compass bearing, check your bearings are logical before committing yourself to the next leg. Compasses have 360 degrees, increasing from zero in a clockwise direction so it follows that if your intended route is between North and East, then the bearing should be lower than 90 degrees. If your bearing appears to be 180 degrees out, then you probably have had your compass upside down. This is a very common mistake to make. Compasses should be kept away from magnetic objects – like GPS devices, radios, electric pylons and even parked cars.

When you are following a route description, it will quite often say cross field on a bearing to reach stile. I have been on walks where the other side of the field is 400 yards away and you can't see where the stile is. Reaching the stile directly could be difficult in poor visibility, and if it is missed, you would not know which way to go in order to find it. So aim off, deliberately heading to reach a point some distance to the left (or right) of the stile. When the edge of the field is reached, you will know which direction to go to reach the stile.

Another article was by Chris Dawes on how to survive 100's. He mentions one of the problems was overwhelming fatigue causing hallucinations, stumbling progress and the inability to make decisions. This will usually happen (well it does to me) on the night sections.

Navigation at night needs practice. It is more or less the same as daytime navigating in bad visibility, and sometimes can be much easier. However, hill fog plus darkness is very challenging. I can remember when doing the Wealden Waters, I followed the advice above about aiming off when crossing a large field.

However, I did not know it was an L-shaped field and of course the stile was in the corner. So I missed the stile and when I eventually reached a hedge, there was no stile to be found anywhere. So the tip only works in 99.99% of all known cases.

A good head torch is a great advantage for spotting features a little way off. In practice, for night walking, the effective use of batteries may be no more than 10-15 hours, so it is always worth carrying spare batteries, even if you don't think you will need them.

Studying the map using strong torchlight for any length of time may damage your night vision. Night vision without torchlight can be surprisingly good though the amount of light varies from night to night. Generally, moonlit nights and cloudy/snowy nights with reflected distant streetlights can be light enough to walk by without a torch. So if you are on a good track, don't be scared to turn the torches off for a while and find out how much you can see.

Full use of natural features should be made where possible - with the proviso that following features such as streams steeply downhill in rocky mountainous areas is not recommended as this will often lead into difficult or dangerous ground. So if you're intending to follow a stream at night, the map should be studied very carefully and all steep ground, waterfalls, quarries, gullies and crags noted and given a wide berth. This is part of the process of being able to read the countryside from a map mentioned earlier.

Wherever possible when not on a challenge walk, it is probably best to try to stick to good paths and tracks, until you are proficient enough. I can remember a couple of people, 1 on the White Peak 100 and 1 on the Durham Dales 100, who finished up 10 miles off course because they couldn't navigate at night. More work for body wagon drivers (a fine under-rated body of people) who had probably only worked out the best route between checkpoints.

Anyway, I hope this hasn't been a case of teaching granny to suck eggs.

Eyesores

On a recent walk in the countryside I came across a campsite of "Swampy" type characters. They were camped out protesting about a proposal to re-open a quarry and destroying the beautiful scenery. But looking at their campsite it would appear to me that they had already made as big a mess as quarrying ever would.

Quarrying is only one of many things that are classed as "eyesores" by some people. Granted some of them may look gruesome, but they do provide much needed employment for local people. So in that sense, they are necessary. And I have come across quite a few places in many parts of the country where dis-used quarries and mines have enhanced the countryside. This is especially true along and across the Pennines. And can you imagine a walk in Cornwall without some old mine buildings appearing somewhere along the way. They are part of the scenery now, but there were probably people complaining that they were eyesores a hundred years ago.

Another thing that has caused some complaints in recent years is the number of wind farms that seem to have sprung up. Given that they need wind to work, and the tops of our hills and mountains are probably the windiest places you will find, then they are almost bound to be a blot on somebody's favourite walking area. But as they are useful I am prepared to class them as necessary evils. If I don't like them I can always go walking somewhere else. The same can be said about the telecom towers/telephone masts that have appeared on the hillsides. I am not a great fan of these either, but as they twice allowed me to call help for someone which would otherwise have taken several hours, they have gained a modicum of acceptance from me.

Perhaps something could be done to hide the wind farms and telephone masts. How about painting the wind farms with camouflage paint instead of brilliant white. Or what about disguising the telephone towers as trees. The mind boggles about how you could disguise Fylingdales or Menwith Hill. Suggestions to the Ministry of Defence please, not me. There doesn't seem to be a lot that can be done about electricity pylons either. I have read that more electricity cables are being put underground, but it will be many a long year before they all disappear, if ever. Another necessary evil to live with, but there doesn't seem to be as many people who object to them, perhaps because they have been around for so long.

One eyesore that has been around for a few years that I don't consider necessary is motorways. Of course I use them, but I don't like them either when I am on them or off them. You all remember Parkinson's Law. No, well it says "Work expands to fill the time available". Edwards Law states "Traffic expands to fill the roads available". So in my view building more roads just encourages more people to use them and in the process destroys large areas of countryside for no reason whatsoever. It is not just the land they are built on but the noise from them disturbs the peace for miles around. I can remember walking on the Invicta 100 about 10 years ago and almost everywhere you went you could here the noise from some motorway or main road. Walking across a large bridge beside the motorway just before the breakfast stop at 7am on the Sunday morning, the traffic was solid and the noise was deafening and the fumes choking. Motorways are definitely an unnecessary evil to me.

It does occur to me that not all supposed eyesores are the result of some large political requirement or multi-national company mega-bucks profit making requirement. I have walked in many parts of the country, and no doubt you have to, and come across fields of rusting old tractors and lorries and trailers and goodness knows what else. These are all down to the farmer who can't be bothered to scrap anything properly. Or if it was in Scotland, the farmer being frugal as who knows when he might need spare parts from these vehicles. There is one place in the Peak District where there is a field of about 60 Trabants rusting away. Rusting may not be the right word as I think they have fibre glass bodies which don't rust but you will know what I mean. More eyesores, but an Englishman's home is his castle, so far be it for me to tell him what he can or can't do with his junk. At least not to his face.

There are lots of other things as well which if they are not eyesores, then they do spoil the view. In this category I put things like hideous buildings (architecturally hideous and/or colour scheme hideous), caravan sites, erosion on "tourist" routes, litter from tourists and there are people I know who think Forestry Commission land is an eyesore. No doubt you can add a few more pet hates of your own. When you think about, probably the biggest eyesore around is a group of walkers just finishing a walk on a wet day in Spring having just done 25 miles through the muddiest, boggiest countryside for miles.

Given all these eyesores littering the countryside, why do we go walking in the countryside. We might just as well stay in town and go walking amongst all the eyesores there. Never mind, just think of the old adage "Beauty is in the mind of the beholder" and go walking where you enjoy walking and ignore the eyesores, and the Swampy's.

Fitness

New reports recently have shown that Britain is becoming a nation of couch potatoes. In time honoured fashion, I would like to disagree with them. Britain is a nation of couch potatoes already. Obesity seems to be the in thing. Back in the eighties, jogging was the in thing and most people were fit, but things are different these days.

It seems to me that today very few people are getting enough exercise. Sitting all day in front of a computer or any of the many jobs that confine people to an office does not give the body enough of a work out. The only answer to this is to take up some form of extra activity to give your body this important workout. It has

been said that walking is one of the best forms of exercise because it contributes so many benefits to the body without risking injury or stressing it. Though I am sure many members of the LDWA are risking injury and stress more than once when training for or doing 100's.

Whilst the physiological benefits of going for a brisk walk have long been known, new research indicates exercise may be as good for your head as your heart. Again I disagree at least so far as LDWA members are concerned. There aren't many members that I have who are right in the head.

These reports I think describe your average Joe and Josephine Soap, not the extremists who are members of the LDWA. To do some of the things we do, fanatics might be a better word than extremist, but what the heck. You pay your money and take your choice.

So how do you get fit for going walking. Well the only way I know is to go walking, and then do some more walking. You could always try doing some jogging or running. Some people swear by it, but I used to find them incompatible. More years ago than I care to remember, when I used to go running and did all the daily training schedules etc, I found it had a detrimental effect on my walking. Whilst I could run a half marathon in 95 – 100 minutes, I used to struggle to walk 10 miles across the Peak District, and to climb Kinder Scout from Hayfield was an all day job, almost. Jogging around the streets of the Potteries or Clacton-on-Sea or Reading or wherever I happened to be was not ideal preparation for doing the Fellsman or the Cleveland Classic or some such similar event.

So for myself, the only way I could get fit for long walks was by doing other long walks and gradually building up the mileage and stamina. But as every person is different, then no doubt every person has their own ideas as to what is best. Everybody knows that I am not fond of hills. I would have completed the Pennine Way years ago if it wasn't for all the hills on it. But I do believe that if you can't manage the long walks every day/week/month, then doing some shorter but hillier routes will have the same effect. If only I had listened to myself all those years ago, I could have been a totally different man now.

Diet has a lot to do with it as well. Stop eating all those beefburgers and chips and start eating healthy foods. At least that is what the experts tell us. But we are only doing this for fun (you call the 100 fun?), so why do we do this. Taken to its logical extreme, we should stop drinking alcohol and drink mineral water instead. Cut out the pub stop for lunch on the social walks. I have a suspicion that would kill the LDWA group walks off.

Talking of drink, which I have done a couple of times, it reminds me of an incident that happened once on the Fellsman. I was with Heath (who nearly had the re-arranged teeth if you remember), my son and another walker when we reached Dent. As we were somewhat inside the time limit we asked if we could leave our rucksacks at the checkpoint whilst we nipped across to the pub for a quick pint as it was a roasting hot day. The checkpoint marshal nearly had a fit and started ranting and raving. He threatened to throw us out for receiving outside assistance if we did that. Spoilsport.

But you do have to be careful with your diet. Going back to my marathon days, I used to run with a friend of mine who was a vegetarian. I have no problems with that, everybody to their own taste. He used to take vitamin supplements to make up for certain deficiencies in his diet. After one particularly fast marathon (about 4 hours 30 minutes if I recall correctly), we were chosen for a random drugs test (the only one I have ever had). To our surprise my friend failed and was subsequently banned. Something to do with his vitamin supplements containing banned substances. It does show that you have to be careful with what you eat and drink, even if you are a fun runner/walker and not an elite athlete. Still, it may be some time before drug testing is introduced on walks. I would imagine a lot of people on 100's would fail with the amount of pain killers that seem to get consumed on them.

As an afterthought, I wonder if people who want/need to be careful with their diet should do the longer walks. Having seen (and sometimes eaten) some of the concoctions my friend Jack has served up at checkpoints over the years, I would suggest that anybody who is worried about diet should carry their own food with them. But the plates were always cleared. I think it was the way he held the serving spoon and the implied threat of what he would do with it if you left anything. Anyway I am still alive, and I think most of the walkers are too, so it can't have been that bad.

Perception

Some time ago there was a program on television about the Sand Marathon. This was about a 6 day 160 mile walk/run/race across the Sahara desert. It made the LDWA 100's look like child's play, or a wimp's alternative to the real thing. But then, people who do the 100's have the same feeling about the 30 milers. And the people who do the 30 milers probably think the same about walks organized/completed by rambles.

But what constitutes a tough walk is just a matter of perception. What I perceive as an easy walk (I can think of one or two) is somebody else's marathon epic walk. And what I perceive of as a difficult walk (I can think of lots), there are other people who think they are as easy as a walk in the park. I am playing correspondence chess at the moment with a chap in Germany. In his correspondence a week or two back he said it had been a nice day and he had been for a long walk in the park and he was worn out. I replied that I had been for a long walk in the park that day as well. I just omitted to mention the fact that my park was the Peak District National Park. Didn't want to upset him too much as he is beating me. But as I said it is all a matter of perception.

One perception people like to give is that they are good and/or fast walkers. A couple of my friends I always perceived as this. Probably because they were. Then on the Downsman 100, they both dropped out, but I finished. I perceived this was an easy 100 (if there is such a thing), they perceived it was a difficult one. I made the most of it for the next twelve months, but things eventually returned to normal.

About 18 months ago I met a guy whilst I was checkpointing on an event and my perception was that he was a bit of a nutter (this perception has been toned down in the interests of decency). He was after some sort of endurance record. He had done 135 25 mile walks with a 45 pound pack on his back and only needed a couple more to get into the Guinness Book of Records. He wasn't so bad himself, but he had an entourage of about eighteen supporters who caused havoc at the checkpoints whilst they were waiting for him. They all perceived him as a hero, not a nutter. I don't object to him doing these daft things, I have done a few myself in my time. But he didn't have to upset everyone else whilst he was doing it. He could have gone off with his eighteen supporters and done these endurance walks where it didn't affect anybody else.

On this walk, and other walks, I have found another group of walkers I perceive to be as big a group of troublemakers as runners/backmarkers/etc. Or to be more precise, I didn't find them. Who is this group of would-be troublemakers? They are the non-starters in events. Recently there were nearly 30 of them in an event with which I was involved. About two-thirds of these had rung up in the last couple of days to ask to be included and said they would pay on the day, then didn't show. Now the group organizing the event had gone to the trouble and expense of printing route descriptions for these people, getting tally cards for them and buying food for them. On some events I have seen, these are problems (and expenses) organizers could do without. The no-shows who had paid are recipients of a bit less of my irritation, and those who rang up (two) to say that they wouldn't be able to make it are entirely blameless. Perhaps somebody would like to circulate a blacklist of these no-shows so that events could refuse their entry unless/until they had paid their entry fee.

Talking of perceptions, a lot of people perceive that I am a bit daft. This perception is totally wrong. I am stark raving bonkers. You ask Morticia. Talking of people being a bit daft, there were a couple of people on

the Exmoor 100 who went up to her and asked “Is your name really Morticia?”. I ask you, is that daft or is that really daft. Everybody knows her real name is

AONB

I have recently had an enforced layoff from walking, so have been indulging in a spot of nostalgia wallowing. Remembering the good old days as they say.

I started (was coerced into) walking about 50 years ago when I was in the Sea Scouts. This was in the middle of Yorkshire about 50 miles from the sea, so why the Sea Scouts you may ask, but that is another story. I went out on the usual scout hikes, not very far and not very interesting. Then somebody said there was a scouts challenge walk coming up for teams of three and would I like to be in their team. I was flattered of course and immediately said yes. Silly fool. I found out afterwards they only asked me because they thought I might be fitter than the others who weren't already in it as I did a paper round every morning.

Anyway, this challenge walk was the 3 Peaks. The proper 3 Peaks, not the Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon exhibitionists one. We started at Chapel-le-Dale and covered Whernside, Pen-y-Ghent and Ingleborough. We finished, and not in last place either and so I became hooked, after my muscles had returned to normality.

Because it was where I started, the Yorkshire Dales have always been my favourite walking area. I have been there many many times and always enjoyed it. I used to enjoy going back to do one of the challenge walks, or to do a 100. But there are other areas of natural beauty (designated by me, not the government) that I have enjoyed walking in. I always enjoy a visit to the North York Moors, although these days I tend to avoid Aidensfield, sorry Goathland, even though I used up 2 seconds out of my 15 minutes of fame by walking behind Nick Berry whilst they were filming in Goathland.

Being Cornish born and Devon bred, and still a Plymouth Argyle supporter, I have a liking for Dartmoor. I can lose myself (sometimes literally) for hours on Dartmoor. It is such a large expanse of wilderness that you can go for miles without seeing another soul. Just what I like. By the same token, Exmoor is quite good as well, but there I try to avoid the northern parts as they tend to get a bit touristy. I remember once getting to the top of Dunkery Beacon after doing about 20 miles only to find you could drive to about half a mile from the top and there were hundreds of people up there. I should have realised that was a possibility from looking at the map.

Possibly because of the Celtic connection, I have many happy memories of Scotland. But then again, it might be because I was looking through rose tinted whisky glasses. One of the few long distance paths I have completed is the West Highland Way. And my favourite view is of Beauchille Etive Mor from the Kingshouse. The one thing I have against Scotland is that I always seem to have millions of companions on my walks. Not people but midges. Horrible things.

Having emigrated from the South West to the North Midlands, I tend to find I have the same people problem with the Peak District. But over the years I have found quiet areas where I could enjoy the tranquillity all by myself, or just with a few companions, not half of Sheffield and Manchester. I avoid Dovedale and Castleton and one or two other places like the plague, but could get some good walks in quite close by without the tourists. You just have to know where to look.

Another place in the Midlands that I find quite beautiful and not crowded is the Long Mynd and the nearby hills. I have to thank the Marches group for introducing me to them. I have enjoyed many fine days (not weatherwise though) on them. Close by there is also the Offa's Dyke path, which again provided some interesting and scenic walks.

Down south, I have enjoyed days out on both the South Downs and the North Downs, but tend to think that they are a bit monotonous for more than one day at a time. No doubt there will be a lot of walkers who say otherwise, but everybody to their own taste and favourites. I am sorry to have admit that I haven't done any walking in the Chilterns and not much in the Cotswolds, although a number of people have said how nice they are. Maybe I will get around to them one day.

Because of the number of tourists there are, I avoid going to the Lake District and Snowdon. I go walking to get away from people, not to join thousands of them. They are very beautiful areas with plenty of good walks with hundreds of people on them, so I avoid them. However, the local economies rely on the "tourists" and get more from them than they would ever get from me, so they probably miss me even less than I miss them. I do go there sometimes if it is a nice day during the winter. Then I usually have the place to myself.

Just up the road from the Lake District, you have the Howgills and the North Pennines. Good walks, good views and plenty of enjoyment to be had here without the crowds, except on the Pennine Way and the Coast to Coast walks. If I want to go walking in Wales, then I head for the quieter area of the Brecon Beacons.

You may notice that all my areas of natural beauty are in this country. In 50 years of walking, I have walked less than 50 miles on the continent. There are more than enough places in Great Britain to keep anybody happy. The trouble with nostalgia wallowing is that you only remember the good times and things do change when you go back 20 years later. But who wants to remember the bad times anyway.

More Erosion

I would like to return to a subject I touched on a year or two ago – erosion. I saw a piece on the news recently that they were thinking of closing part of the Hadrian's Wall footpath, or at least limiting access to it, because of erosion. The blame was placed on the hundreds or thousands of walkers doing the Pennine Way, at the point where it follows Hadrian's Wall.

It just so happened that a few days previously I had been on part of the Pennine Way with my brother. Admittedly we were not on the Hadrian's Wall part, we were doing the Bowes Loop. This was on a lovely summer Saturday, but we only saw two other walkers during the whole day. I would like to ask, where were the hundreds and thousands of walkers on the Pennine Way who are causing all this erosion? And as for erosion, well there were several places on this route where we had difficulty finding the path. Part of our walk duplicated part of the Durham Dales 100 a few years ago and I seem to remember that conditions were the same then.

Whilst I don't doubt there is erosion on the Hadrian's Wall path, I feel it is wrong to blame Pennine Way walkers or even Hadrian's Wall walkers (I assume there are some). I gathered (perhaps erroneously) from the aforementioned (that's a big word for me) news item that the area of erosion is near a favourite spot for day-trippers and sightseers. Perhaps the authorities should consider banning or restricting them instead.

Given the fact that more and more named and waymarked routes are opening up, this seems to me to be encouraging more people to walk in specific places rather than to scatter themselves around the countryside. This may start to cause erosion and other problems on these routes. As a keen advocate of these routes myself, am I contributing to the erosion problem? Should we start a campaign to "disband" all the National Trails and Long Distance Paths because they are environmentally unfriendly? Don't look at me to do it as I will stay on the side of the Lovers of Unfriendly Trails, LOU's for short.

I said earlier that whilst walking the Bowes Loop we only saw two other walkers. However in one place there was a lot of evidence left by other walkers. The Pennine Way crosses the A66 by means of a tunnel. This tunnel was like a council rubbish dump, it was disgustingly full of litter. To re-iterate something else I said a year or two ago, take your litter home with you. Or at least take it with you until you find a proper litterbin. I have been told that finding the route up Everest these days is quite simple, you just follow the trail of rubbish. If it is true, I think it is disgusting. The people who left the rubbish (on the Pennine Way or on Everest) should be ashamed of themselves.

On a recent group walk on Exmoor that I was on, I came across a couple of people who were even slower than I am and I had great difficulty maintaining my “title” of Backmarker. It is not that these people were slow walkers, they were just into nature. Every tree and bush we passed had to be identified, every bird seen and heard had to be identified and so on. I exaggerate slightly of course (only slightly) but they did seem very knowledgeable about all things natural. Or maybe they just seemed that way because I am so un-knowledgeable. Anyway, it made quite a pleasant change from listening to companions stories of recent and not so recent walks, and then boring them with my own tales. At least during the short periods when I am with somebody else on these walks.

But if this couple were hoping for a convert, then I am afraid they were disappointed. I will remain the ignoramus that I have always been. I will enjoy walking my way and everybody else can enjoy walking their own way, as long as it is legal of course. What a boring place the world would be if we all did and enjoyed the same thing. Variety is the spice of life as they say. Just as long as hills are not included in my bit of the variety. Most people have an excuse for going walking, to climb that hill just because it is there, to complete that challenge walk one minute faster than the last time they did it, or something similar. My excuse is just to get away from the pains and perils of my working life, and to get away from Morticia’s nagging, but don’t tell her I said so. If I didn’t go walking I am sure she couple find even more exciting things for me to do, such as decorating or gardening, both of which I detest. I keep telling her that I do the long walks just to impress her, and as she is never impressed by my efforts, I have to go out and try another one. If she ever says she is impressed by my efforts, then I will have to find another excuse. If anybody has any suggestions, please let me know. It will be useful to have one ready and waiting rather than to have to think it up on the spur of the moment.

History

A friend of mine from the local chess club, who is also a member of the local historical society, has written a few books. A couple of them are about rambles in and around local market towns. Now these are not rambles that would appeal to members of the LDWA, probably not even to members of the Ramblers Association. They are rambles linking various historical and/or interesting points in the towns.

Does anyone ever notice all the historical places passed on an LDWA walk? Just taking the White Peak 100 as an example, because I am intimately acquainted with it. It started off by climbing to the local “folly”, dropped onto an old railway line, down a valley passed some old mines, onto another railway line, through Bakewell of tart/pudding fame to Chatsworth, one of the most famous of the historic houses open to the public. Later on it passed a stone circle, some more old mines, a motte and bailey castle, went down Dovedale of “Compleat Angler” fame, along another old railway line, passed Thor’s cave, a pre-historic dwelling so I am told, onto the Cat and Fiddle, the second highest pub in England and back down an old packhorse road to the finish. Maybe they are not all to your taste, but there must something there to interest everybody to some extent. And that doesn’t include all the bits that I have left out. Somebody could write a good-sized guide book on the places passed on that walk.

I remember interesting places on other walks as well. I used to do the Two Crosses with a group of friends. You actually had to go slightly off route to get to one of the crosses, but who is complaining about doing an extra 50 yards, especially when it is not far into the event. Towards the end there is a tower, Peel Tower, on top of the moors. I don't know anything about why it is there maybe it is another folly, but it is open to the public and you can pay your shilling and climb the 150 steps to the top for a good view. So I am told. One year a couple of the group decided to climb to the top, but I chickened out and had a cup of coffee at the bottom whilst waiting for them. I know I am mad, but I am not that mad.

On the Wellington Boot I can remember passing an old dog pound and then there was the climb to Culmstock Beacon, I don't know why that was there, and then passing the Wellington monument. You could lose 15 minutes there wandering round the outside of it and reading all the signs and information bits, if you were in any fit state to after 60 miles.

Several walks I have done on the North York Moors have passed some interesting old stones/crosses. If you are doing the Cleveland Way, it is worth doing a detour to the White Horse at Kilburn. I don't mean the pub but if that is what takes your fancy far be it for me to complain, and the old priory. There are other interesting features as well such as the Rosedale Abbey mines, Skelton Tower and Goathland, home of Heartbeat. One sorely missed interesting place is/was the golf balls at Fylingdales. Everybody complained about them whilst they were there, but now that they are gone they are missed. However I suppose it all depends on how much you like the concrete pyramid that replaced them.

Down in the South West, you can't go very far in Cornwall without passing some old mine buildings somewhere. In venturing a bit further east into Devon, then Dartmoor has a whole lot of interesting places, at least one of which is best not seen from the inside. Again there are plenty of ancient crosses and clapper bridges, and some more modern (16th/17th century) boundary stones for those who want to look for them. If you want some culture, you can always visit Widdecombe and look for the fair, or if in need of fortification you could try the wine at Buckfast Abbey. Further east still you come to the South Downs Way, but there is not much there. After all there is not much history associated with Winchester Cathedral if you discount the New Vaudeville Band (oops, showing my age again), and Arundel Castle. And I never did find out the significance of Chanctonbury Ring. Was it an ancient hill fort, or a Roman temple, or somebody's private woodland? Or all three?

In Scotland the West Highland Way appears to have several connections, real or imaginary, with Rob Roy. Then the Northern part of it follows General Wade's Military Road to a large extent and then passes the Kingshouse to Altnafeadh. Here you can leave the West Highland Way and go down Glencoe, full of history, or continue up Devils Staircase and marvel at Wade's road-building in the 1730's.

I always thought Lincolnshire and East Anglia were boring places to walk around, but I am assured that there are plenty of things to interest the history student. But I think they are great places because somebody thoughtfully removed all the hills from them. And you know my feelings about hills. I remember many years ago walking on a path in Lincolnshire which became a track. A short way down the track I was accosted by a farmer who said I was trespassing. I explained that I was following the sign posted footpath. He then explained that the path was the route to brickworks, long since closed. Where the path became a track, I had gone on to private property. The need for a path was pointless these days as all you could do was go up it and then go back. But I did learn about another bit of long lost local history.

So as an experiment, on your next long walk, look out for all the hidden historical gems, instead of just looking at the scenery. There is a surprising amount of it, even in the remote parts of the countryside, so you don't have to walk the canals looking for the old mills of Oldham and Rochdale, unless that is what you fancy doing.



The Kingshouse, on the West Highland Way, at the top of Glen Etive. A glorious summer scene.

Comrades in Distress?

How far would you go to help somebody on a challenge walk? I don't mean your mates who you are doing the walk with, but strangers. Obviously if they are in need of serious assistance, we would all stop and help, at least I hope we would. But there are more subtle ways of seeking and receiving assistance.

A few years I was doing a walk which involved going through the night. I had been to the area a couple of weeks beforehand and recce'd what I thought would be my overnight section. Unfortunately, through a combination of getting lost and walking even slower than normal, by the time it went dark I hadn't reached the section that I had investigated. Then I chanced upon a young couple, well younger than me, who were on the walk. They said they had reconnoitred this section and I was quite welcome to tag along with them. The young lady was making hard work of it, but the young man seemed to be doing fine.

We eventually reached the next checkpoint. This was as far as they knew the route, but it was the point that I had started my recce from, so I now invited them to tag along with me. The young lady was really struggling by now, but I stayed with her and her companion showing them the way to the next check point. Here the young lady retired. Good, I thought somewhat uncharitably. At least I can now speed up (stop laughing all of you) and have some company from the young man over the next stage. However, when we left the

checkpoint he was off like a greyhound and I was on my own again. I thought some uncharitable thoughts about him as well.

The lesson that I learnt from this is that you should always do your own thing. It is different if you are walking with your friends or on a social walk, but if you are by yourself on a challenge walk and somebody wants to walk with you, then it is up to them to match your pace. Don't slow down to let them stay with you and don't speed up to try and keep up with them. Both of those actions will probably cause you more grief in the long run (walk).

As I said, it is different if you are walking with friends, especially if you are a passenger in their car and are relying on them to give you a lift home. They might get a bit fed up if they have to wait a further 3 hours for you to arrive after they had finished. If they are waiting for you to give them a lift then you might get the odd jocular remark, but in the main they will grin and bear it.

A similar situation can arise on events like the Wheeldale Tandem (are there any other events like it?) where 2 walkers use different routes and meet half way round to finish together. I once did it with a former editor of Strider and had to wait half an hour for him. That was an unusual event in itself, but there was somebody else there who had been waiting over 2 hours. Puts a strain on friendships that does, at least for the rest of the walk.

Then there is the companion who keeps rabbiting on whilst all you are trying to do is get enough breath to climb a small hill which seems and feels like the North Face of the Eiger. And when you get to the top, they then ask if you are alright. Pity they didn't notice half way up and shut up. As AW once said in one of his books, if you must choose a companion, choose a quiet one. On the other hand, half way through the second night of a 100, I could probably do with somebody talking to me to keep me awake.

Of course there are some people who are welcomed with open arms to walk with you (not me). A few years ago I came across a walker called Ben who used to carry a dozen bottles of beer in his rucksack and was always willing to share it. He was a favourite companion of quite a few walkers I know. Not me though, I don't touch the stuff. I am a malt whisky man (hint, hint if you were thinking of sending me a Christmas present), but malt whisky and long distance walking are not compatible.

I do remember once on a blazing hot day, I did a marshals walk. As usual, I had been left behind to fend for myself before halfway. With about 3 miles of the 25 left to go, I passed this pub on a country lane. I was pegging out for a drink so I popped inside. The first pint of lager never touched the sides, so I had a second one which went down a bit more slowly. When I continued, I couldn't manage to walk down the white line in the middle of the road. In fact I was weaving so much I couldn't even find the middle of the road. I did make it back to the car, but it was more by luck than judgement.

I have learnt to enjoy walking on my own. It is not that I am anti-social, I just don't like people. And they reciprocate the feeling.

Drinking and Walking

I do remember once on a blazing hot day, I did a marshals walk. As usual, I had been left behind to fend for myself before halfway. With about 3 miles of the 25 left to go, I passed this pub on a country lane. I was pegging out for a drink so I popped inside. The first pint of lager never touched the sides, so I had a second one which went down a bit more slowly. When I continued, I couldn't manage to walk down the white line

in the middle of the road. In fact I was weaving so much I couldn't even find the middle of the road. Those of you like me who are old enough to remember that the old police test for drunkenness was to walk down a straight white line will realise that I would have failed miserably that day. I did make it back to the car, but it was more by luck than judgement. Stop me if you have heard this story before. You have, sorry, I had better move on to something else.

Whilst on the subject of drink, I do remember a few years ago walking the West Mendip Way with my son. Shortly after we started we came to a steep hill. Being young and fit (so he said), he soon left the old man behind. Now as you all know, you don't have to be young and fit to leave me behind on the hills, old and geriatric will do just as well. Anyway I eventually got to the top of this climb and he was sat there waiting for me with some derogatory comment. He didn't allow me time for a rest and was off. As it was flat or downhill for a while, I did manage to keep up with him. Then we came to another hill and he was off again. I got to the top and again no time for a rest. Again we stayed together for a while until the next climb when the scenario was repeated once more. Groundhog Day or *dejas vu* come to mind.

Fortunately for me, shortly after this we came to a pub where we decided to stop for lunch. A pleasant hour was spent there with a couple of pints for young Eddie and a couple of lemonades for me (or something like that). When we carried on it wasn't long before the next hill materialised in front of us. It is all hills on the West Mendip Way, nothing like the Pennine Way of course, but enough for me. This time however he didn't quite leave me behind. At the top of the hill he was only 20 yards in front so when he stopped for his rest, I got one as well. On to the next hill and I actually managed to beat him up it. We eventually got to Cheddar Gorge and dropped down to Cheddar village to be picked up by Morticia. She was there ready and waiting this time, fortunately for young Eddie, as he was totally knackered by then. I couldn't make up my mind whether he was not as fit as he claimed to be, or the drinks at lunchtime had had an adverse effect on him.

I know it affects different people in different ways, but I used to wonder how alcohol affected your walking. I once came across a chap who at the start of a walk would send a couple of bottles to each checkpoint so that he could have a drink when he got there. Just to be on the safe side, he would carry a couple of spares in his rucksack. In his case the drink seemed to rejuvenate him but I wouldn't recommend everybody to do it. I don't know what he used to do on 100's but I suspect 32 bottles of beer would have been too much even for him, even spread over 40 hours or so.

Then there were a couple of my old cronies (sorry, mates) who always used to do a big *recce* of the 100. However they were not route finding, at least that was not the main reason for the *recce*. They were looking for the best pubs on the route. In this case though it was not the drink they were after (so they told me), but on Saturday and Sunday evening they did enjoy their pub meal and the *recce* was to discover the pubs with the best food. Of course on 100's like the Yorkshire Dales, the choice was somewhat limited. Something along the lines of "That's the pub, take it or leave it".

So does drinking and walking go together? Different people react in different ways but on the whole I would say "Don't Drink and Walk". I would say that only if I did I wouldn't get invited on any more Christmas walks, so my official line is drinking and walking go together very nicely. I would say that the drink in the pub after the end of the walk is the best bit. There again I have bad memories of that as well. It was having a drink in the pub after the Wheeldale Tandem that the then editor of *Strider* persuaded me to write an article for the magazine, which then turned into a series of articles and here I am umpteen years later still writing them. So I guess in my case I should stay out of pubs altogether.

Shorties

Rambling on as I was last time about hot days and drinking brings other hot days to mind. I went on a holiday in March with Morticia to the Rhine Valley for a few days. It might only have been March but the temperature was in the seventies (or twenties depending on your age). The day after we got back it snowed, but that is a different story.

Now in the Rhine Valley in March none of the touristy places were open, so Morticia went shopping in Rudesheim and Boppard and Koblenz and etc., etc. After a while (about 10 minutes actually) I got fed up with this, so I did a couple of short walks just to amuse myself. They were only short ones by LDWA standards. One of them was only a mile out and a mile back, but it was up the Lorelei rock with about 600 feet of climbing in the mile. And you all know how much I enjoy climbing. They say the views from the top are magnificent but I was collapsed on a bench gasping for breath and didn't take any notice of the views. But it was somewhere different to walk.

Years ago I used to travel all round the country with work. I still do to a certain extent. On my travels I used to drive past all these footpath signs and used to wonder where they went. I got into the habit of stopping occasionally, when time permitted, in the middle of nowhere and doing an hours walking along some of these paths. Most of the time the paths went nowhere in particular and quite often it used to be an out and back walk along the same path, but it was reasonably interesting in that it was paths that I had never walked before and in all probability would never walk again. How many other people can claim that they have been walking in Kilsyth, Belton (Lincs), Whitchurch (Hants?), Clacton and Axbridge, amongst other places. How many other people would want to claim that, I ask myself? You are not obliged to answer it.

Now another seemingly contentious point are out and back walks. These are walks where you go from A to B and then back to A along the same route. Some people claim that these are boring because you are effectively doing the same route twice. But I contend that the return journey is just as interesting. Although the immediate scenery will be the same, the views on the horizon are totally different. Even with the immediate surroundings, there are always features that are only noticeable from one direction. So out and back routes are never as boring as some people try to make out.

On the same lines there are people who claim that walking along canals or old railway lines is boring. It may be boring to some people because there are no hills to climb, unless it is the High Peak Trail, but they are never boring from the scenery angle. Going across embankments, through cuttings, never in a straight line because they are contour hugging, the scenery is always changing. If you are bloody-minded, which people say I am, you could always claim that walking in Dovedale (one of the prettiest dales once you leave the tourists behind) or across Kinder Scout is boring because the scenery never changes. But in these cases, it may never change but it is always interesting and challenging.

There should never be a reason for claiming any countryside walk is a boring one. If you keep your eyes open and your wits about you, then you can always find points of interest on any walk. Note that I said countryside walk. If you walk the back streets of London or Manchester or any of the big towns and cities, then I would probably find that boring. The highlight would probably be in dodging the muggers.

Even so, a few years ago I walked the Doncastrian Way with a couple of friends. This goes around and through Doncaster if you hadn't guessed. I wasn't overly enthusiastic about the central bits, but there were other parts of it that were varied and interesting. You never can tell can you. There used to be, probably still is, a Round Rotherham walk that falls into the same category. No doubt other towns/cities have similar walks, I just haven't come across them yet. Of course there are also things like the Thames Path, a National Trail, which goes through the centre of London. It is possibly the only National Trail that goes through a large city. I don't know anybody who has walked the London section so I have yet to find out how

interesting that would be. I know some of the coastal trails go through/around various seaside towns but I cannot think of anything that makes such a large chunk of the walk.

Though if more of them did then Morticia would have more chance for some shopping and I would be allowed more time for some walking.

Hibernation

Having seen the weather we have had recently sometimes makes me wish that I could hibernate over the winter like some of the more sensible wildlife in this country. Not for them the getting frozen and soaked by going out in mid-winter. Thoughts of the downpours like those we had on the Christmas walk are enough to send all but the most die-hard LDWA members indoors to the comfort of the pub to extend the lunch break on their walks. Always assuming they get to the start of the walk in the first place.

The sound of the rain hammering against my bedroom window on the Saturday night did anything but entice me from my nice warm bed, but it was the Christmas lunch and more importantly, I had paid for it so I wanted to get my money's worth. Ebenezer Scrooge is a pussycat when compared to me.

Given the way the rain was coming down, you would have had to consider using your best waterproofs for a five minute dash to and from the shops never mind a 4 hour jaunt around the wilds of Staffordshire. Thankfully, the monsoon ended halfway around the walk, but by then the damage had been done. I was wet, miserable, fed up, etc, etc. Even the delights of the lunch could not dispel the feeling totally. To make matters worse, I was sat in my office at home the following day watching the sun stream through the window. It's amazing how a spot of sunshine can change the mood, in this case it just made me even more depressed. Why didn't you come out yesterday you silly sun.

In fact, the foul weather got me thinking about why I should go into walking hibernation. I never was a massive fan of winter walking, just like hill walking. But I do remember some good times on the 2 Crosses and the Trollers. For one thing, the short days are a challenge, particularly when it comes to day trips, to get a reasonable mileage in. Going away for a few days or planning for some walking after dark are a couple of ways around this. Come to think of it though, walking in rotten weather and in the dark (at the same time) gives you some good training for the 100's as they always seem to have lousy weather these days, but as I am not capable of doing a 100 any more, it doesn't change my perspective.

A few years ago winter walking required winter skills. Thoughts of going out in snow and ice soon bring forth visions of crampons and ice axes and the need to be able to use them. I can remember walking in 1963, but I was younger then, and that is a different story anyway. With global warming, snow is now encountered less and less frequently for the majority of us, making the need for winter skills less relevant, except for the die-hards who require their fix of five Munros a month, every month. Not so long ago I went up to Fort William and climbed Ben Nevis by the tourist route in January only to see less snow than when I climbed it in June 40 years before. And for those of you who can remember one of my previous articles, Fort William is still not under water. I know the road from Leek to Buxton still gets closed by snow every year, but nowadays it just seems to be for hours at a time, not days.

In the end I decided it would be a shame to let thoughts of inclement weather and shorter days put me off, there is a special magic to be sampled whilst winter walking, if you pick the right day and place. Has anybody got a spare crystal ball so that I can pick the right day and place? After all, you can get torrential downpours at any time of year. Remembering the recent summer floods proves the point, doesn't it.

So all in all, I probably feel that hibernation is best left to the animals. Go out and try to enjoy yourself, whatever the weather and whatever the season. Come to think of it, there are people I have come across who don't like going out when it is too hot. As somebody less famous than me once said, you can't please all of the people all of the time. That is true, but judging by the grumbles I hear on walks, also true is the saying you can't please any LDWA member any of the time. If it is not the weather, it is the route description, or if it is not that it is how badly Sheffield United or Port Vale are doing. Cheer up, it will soon be summer, you can grumble about the England cricket team then.

Completion

Question: When is a completion not a completion? This question has arisen a few times in friendly discussion/arguments with friends over what constitutes a completed walk. It first came about a while ago when I was involved in a walk that had 6, 10, 16, 20 and 26 mile routes. However, the certificate just stated that Joe Bloggs had completed the Crawley Crawl in 4 hours 30 minutes, but no mention of the distance covered. One or two of the "elite" runners who completed the 26 miles in 4 hours 35 minutes were not happy that it appeared that Joe Bloggs had a better time than them although he had only covered 6 miles. Mutterings of discontent were heard from them, something along the lines that Joe Bloggs hadn't really completed the course.

A few weeks later came the Canterbury Canter, a similar sort of event with 4 or 5 different routes. This time the organisers had left space on the certificate to write in the distance covered by each participant. The "elite" runners were happy this time. I would like to point out that the Crawley Crawl was not LDWA organised and the Canterbury Canter was. But I have also come across it the other way round, so the LDWA are not perfect. Yet. And you all know what I think of elite runners anyway.

After this the discussions/arguments came up every so often, what constitutes a completion? Let me quote you a couple of examples of my own experiences. Back in 199x I was participating in a 100 in the North of England, but being at the back of the walk (as usual I know), I got timed out at just over 70 miles. Not because I failed to make the time control but the controller decided I wouldn't make the following one. Heated discussions ensued over the next few weeks about this but that has nothing to do with this story. The following day I went back to the checkpoint with my brother and son (who had been supporting me on the 100) and we walked back to the finish, although in my case limped might be a more appropriate description as I had stiffened up overnight. So in my eyes I had completed the walk but not the challenge, but that was all I wanted to do anyway. So I tell everyone.

A few weeks later, my son points out that I hadn't really completed the walk. The finish was at a school and when we were about half a mile from it we turned off and went down to the railway station to catch the train back to pick up the car. So Little Ed keeps insisting that I haven't finished the walk yet. Quite annoying he got, but for the fact he was bigger than me he would have got a clip around the ear. So what constitutes a completion?

Now to bore you with my second example. As some of you know doubt know, I am more a fan of trail-bagging than peak-bagging. One of the trails I have been doing is the Pennine Way. It has taken me 40 years to cover about two-thirds of it. Now there are bits that I did 40 years ago that have been changed, such as at Edale (which I have done anyway) and Saddleworth (which I haven't). Also, when I did the section around Bowes, I did the alternative route, not the direct route. Does this count? If/when I finish the other third, can I count it as completed? Or do I have to go back and fill in the missing gaps. Similarly on the South Downs Way, there are 2 different routes into/out of Eastbourne. Do you have to do both to count it as a completion as I have only done one of them. So what constitutes a completion?

So on to the third of my two examples. A bit like the Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy, a trilogy in four parts. There is another of the long-distance paths that I was doing in small stretches. This one was one of the few that I had managed to complete to mine and everybody else's satisfaction. Then years later some faceless bureaucrat in an office somewhere decides to go and add an extra 20 miles to it. My completion wiped out at a stroke. Did I let it depress me. Of course I did. I felt extremely depressed all the time on the day I went back to do the new 20 miles. I had to miss out on a shopping trip to Chester with Morticia. And Morticia made certain I felt depressed about it, the way only she can.

To answer my own question, I think a completion is when you think you have completed it. Nothing else matters. You are really the only one that counts and whilst you might fool others, you can't fool yourself. That is enough of this psychological (do I mean psychiatric or perhaps psychedelic) mumbo-jumbo. Just go off and do your own thing.

A final bit of reminiscing from me. Having said that I am not keen on elite runners, some of them aren't bad. I remember Steve Jones winning the London marathon and being interviewed afterwards. He said he wasn't a hero, the real heroes were those who took 5 hours. I took 4 hours 59 minutes that year and with a bit of artistic license I counted myself a hero. Maybe I shouldn't have sprinted (relatively speaking) to the finish to try to beat 5 hours. So Steve is alright.

Boots

Just recently I have encountered a few people suffering from a disease known as BDS – Boot Deficiency Syndrome. In some places it is referred to as FDS – Footwear Deficiency Syndrome. This shouldn't be confused with FDR, who I believe was once president of one of our former colonies. They were granted independence on the strength of some frivolous demand, no representation without taxation, or something like that.

Anyway, BDS as far as I am aware is linked to that equally prevalent walking disease EDS (Equipment etc), but we will come back to that later. Over recent months I have come across several cases of BDS, most of which the victims would prefer to forget.

On a challenge walk, one of the checkpoints was in a “posh” village hall. As it had been a particularly vile day, like most this year, walkers were asked to remove their boots before entering to enjoy their well-earned refreshments. Everybody dutifully obliged, although one or two did grumble about it. A friend of mine came in (yes I do have some) and had a cuppa and a chinwag with a few people. When he came to leave, his boots weren't outside the door any more. There was an identical pair there, but 2 sizes smaller than his big feet needed. Apparently somebody who came in just before our friend must have mistakenly taken his boots and left their own. Whilst whoever it was could fit into boots 2 sizes too big, Jim couldn't fit into boots too small. Huge merriment all round, except from Jim. We thought it was funny. Eventually somebody did feel sorry for him and dug him out a pair of trainers the right size so he could finish the walk. I never did find out what happened to his boots or if he ever got them back.

In a similar vein on a different challenge walk, again on a rotten day, one of our senior members stepped in a glutinous mud patch with a couple of miles to go and got stuck. He eventually managed to extricate his feet, but they came out without his boots. Try as they might, the boots couldn't be retrieved. So now he was stuck. Rescue came in the shape of a member of our esteemed committee who ran all the way to the finish (so he claimed), borrowed a pair of boots of the right size and then ran back to our stranded senior member who gratefully put them on and walked to the finish.

Now it is one thing to lose your boots on a walk, however it occurred. It is a far different kettle of fish to forget your boots altogether. Which is precisely what one of our members did on a walk recently when they were supposed to be sweeping the event. It amazes me the lengths some people will go to so as not to be the sweeper. Anyway once more a substitute pair of boots were found and loaned and the two sweepers set off ten minutes after the last walker. On this particular day I was checking in about two thirds of the way round the walk. The last walkers arrived at the checkpoint where I was and left again a few minutes later. Half an hour later the sweepers arrived, the substitute boots were obviously not working very well and the sweeper retired. The only time I have known this to happen, but I am sure sweepers must have retired elsewhere at some time. So I substituted for the sweeper for the remaining third of the walk. But as you can guess, even though the walkers had been going for six hours and I was fresh, we didn't make up much ground on them before the finish. I know I have a reputation to keep up, but as I wasn't walking the event, it didn't matter on this occasion.

Now to the best of my recollection I have never been without boots. The nearest I came was on the Downsman. I had a new pair of boots which I had broken in with about four 10-mile walks. I was to discover this was not enough because after 20 miles my feet were killing me. I felt like throwing them away. Fortunately my brother met me at the next checkpoint and I had a pair of trainers in his car. So I discarded my boots and wore the trainers for the rest of the walk, eventually completing it with sore feet.

Coming back to EDS (Equipment Deficiency Syndrome if you had forgotten). When I was checking in at the start of a walk recently, one of the walkers arrived to check in and said that they had forgotten three pieces of equipment. Not uncommon I thought. The route description was missing, soon rectified with a spare. Their torch, which shouldn't really have been needed by them on this walk. And most importantly, they had forgotten their eye shadow. I was gob-smacked. Never has my gob been so smacked. And most importantly, I couldn't provide any replacement. I was in the doghouse. Again.

Another piece of equipment in its loosest sense that falls prey to EDS is the walk tally. There is at least one person on every walk who loses their tally. I remember the White Peak 100 a few years ago. There was a drink station after about eight miles. Two tallies were handed in there after they had been picked up by other walkers. You would have thought that people would have taken more care at the start of a 100. But you can never tell.

Wimps

Question: Are long distance walkers becoming wimps? Or at least the ones who do challenge walks. I had to ponder this question after reading reviews of several events and they all more or less said the same thing. We walked from A to B where we had some delicious food at the checkpoint, then on to C where we had some more wonderful food and back to the finish where a sumptuous feast was laid on for us. I thought maybe the printers had blundered and included some articles meant for a gourmet magazine, not for a walking one. I can even think of a couple of walks where you used to get offered a shot of whisky at some point of the walk.

Now many years ago, when I was nobbut but a lad, a challenge walk was just that, a challenge. Also, a checkpoint was just that, a point where you checked in. Occasionally it was a tent, more often than not it was a bloke sat in his car out of the wind and rain and anything else the elements could throw at you. Refreshments, you carried them yourself. If you were lucky you might get a cup of water and sometimes you would be mollicoddled and get just the slightest drop (drop being the operative word) of squash. And as for the sumptuous feast at the end, well that was just any marmite sandwiches that you had left over because you hadn't eaten them on the way round.

Back in the long lost days of my youth, there weren't many, if any, 24 hour walks. These seem to have been a relatively modern invention and I do believe you need one or two checkpoints on them where you can get more refreshments than just a cup of water and a digestive biscuit. A cup of soup and a rice pudding should do the trick at these points. But for your average 25 mile challenge walk, if you want to eat whilst on the walk, then take it with you.

If anybody is interested I have this cunning plan to stop people eating on challenge walks. You employ me to prepare the food. That would ensure that half the people on the walk wouldn't eat and the half who did wouldn't finish as they would be suffering from food poisoning. That is the reason why I am always on check-in, my group won't let me anywhere near the food. Their excuse is that they don't have enough money in the kitty to pay all the lawsuits I would generate. It may be one of the reasons I spent many years marshalling on top of Ecton Hill with not a drop of drink or morsel of food anywhere near. Another reason might be that nobody liked me but I can't believe that.

The same can be said about body wagons. These are a modern-ish innovation just to give a bit of luxury to anybody who wimps out. In the good or bad old days, you want to retire, well that is fine but you will have to find your own way back to the finish. I suggest you walk it. No doubt you can think other innovations like route descriptions that have made life easier for the modern challenge walker. Where is the fun of just following a route description and not getting lost. Wimps.

I remember reading in a recent Strider that some people were thinking that the preponderance of social walks was having a detrimental effect on challenge walks. That sounds intellectual, does anybody know what it means. If I follow my reasoning, then I would suggest more people are doing social walks because they are more of a challenge than the challenge walks. You have to take everything you want with you, and if you forget anything you have to call in the village shop as you walk past and get it. Hard luck if you are on the Pennine Way and there are no village shops for thirty miles, you will have to do without.

Therefore social walks are really an attempt to re-create the challenge walks of thirty, forty, fifty years ago. Pick whichever number suits you. And as most members of the LDWA seem to be the same age as me, if not older, I can only assume that the majority who turn out on the group walks are like me and trying to re-live their long lost youth. However a lot of the group walks fail in their objective, if this is what their objective is, by stopping at a pub for lunch. A return to the soft life. Real challenge walkers would ignore the pub and keep walking.

Talking of Ecton Hill, well I did mention it in passing. If, more probably when, my darling Morticia annoys me I tell her that when I pop my clogs I want my ashes scattering on the top of Ecton Hill and I want her to climb it to scatter them. This does not go down too well as she is not much of a walker and likes climbing hills even less than I do. So by way of retaliation she remarks that if I don't watch it I may find myself popping my clogs sooner than anticipated. I then shut up as I am a coward at heart.

Easy

Question: Are long distance walkers becoming wimps? Haven't I heard that question somewhere before. Just to prove they are not wimps, there are a lot of people who choose deliberately go out of their way to find the hardest toughest route that they can. And then they expect everyone else to enjoy them. There is an old saying that says something like if it ain't hard it ain't not worth doing. There was a former prime minister, John Major I think, who said there is no gain without pain.

Well I for one don't believe them. What is wrong with easy, I ask you? Easy is enjoyable, that's what I say. Some time ago the BBC did a series with Julia Bradbury called Railway Walks, which was about walks

along old railway lines. One of these walks was in Scotland from Callendar to Killin, about 23 miles. I had done it myself before the series came out, only in the opposite direction. Easy walking it may be, but the scenery was stunning. Very enjoyable, to me much more enjoyable than slogging 23 miles over various Lakeland Peaks, totally knackered, not caring about the scenery and only interested in getting to the finish so I could have a cup of coffee. So to me, easy is enjoyable. As for the no gain without pain bit, there have been quite a few events with a lot of pain and definitely no gain.

Not that I don't do tough, but I enjoy the easy. Now there is a friend of mine, Concrete Bob, who used to enjoy the rough and the tough. A veteran of 10 100's is our Bob. He has given up long distance walking and goes cycling these days. One day he expressed a desire to cycle the aforementioned route from Callendar to Killin. Then he decided against it. How was he going to get back to Callendar afterwards. My suggestion was that he cycled it. He wasn't sure about that. Good grief I said, a few years ago we would walk 46 miles in a day and think nothing of it, now he was worried about cycling it. Must be old age catching up with us.

I have been walking with Concrete Bob on and off for well over 40 years. Back in the old days we used to do some crazy things, not always associated with walking. But there was a group of us who would go out every weekend intending to go walking but not always succeeding. As an example, we would meet up somewhere to go walking but before the walk started we would get a football out and have a kickabout. Six hours later with the score 93-76 we would decide it was too late to go walking.

There were one or two other characters in that group. There was Steve who was a frustrated disc jockey. When we did go walking he made sure we were all entertained with the latest pop music. Now remember this was in the days before ipods and mp3 players. Steve used to carry a portable battery powered record player and a pile of 45's (7 inch plastic discs to those too young to remember). These were played non-stop until the batteries gave up.

And then there was Stefan. Stefan and his mate John were motorbike fanatics. The group once decided to do a night walk from Hayfield to Glossop over Kinder Scout and Bleaklow. We started out by catching the train to Hayfield and caught the train home from Glossop afterwards. Normal people could still afford to travel by train in those days, not that many people accused us of being normal. Anyway, back to Stefan and John. Because it was a night walk most of us took torches. Not Stefan and John. Between them they carried a motorcycle headlight to illuminate the way. To power it they carried a motorcycle battery. I can't remember how long the illumination lasted but they did carry them all the way around. Nutters maybe, but they were all mates and we had some fun times together.

Talking of night walks and railway walks reminds me of another mad escapade we got up to. We decided to walk along the track of the disused railway from Rowsley to Buxton. A lot of it these days forms the Monsal Trail but in those days it was just a closed railway line. About 6 of us set out late one Saturday night, probably after a little fortification in a local hostelry but I can't remember. What I do remember is that when we reached Bakewell we were met by about a dozen, well at least 4, large burly policemen. Apparently they had been called out by the gamekeeper at Haddon Hall who thought there was a gang of poachers on the loose. The outcome of our discussions with the police was that we had a choice. We could either continue the walk off the railway line or we could enjoy the hospitality of the police cells for the rest of the night. We finished the walk by going along the A6. A bit of a let down.

Ah, the good old days. You couldn't do those things these days could you. There are too many rules and regulations and red tape these days. It takes all the fun out of it.