



Surrey Group

# NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2010



**Dragon Hotel, Montgomery**

### Items for Newsletter

The Newsletter is published three times a year, February, June and October. Reports of past events, letters, and other items should be sent to the Editor one month before the publication date of the next Newsletter. Preferably they should be sent by email or typed, but manuscript will be accepted.

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Visit the group website at [www.ldwasurrey.co.uk](http://www.ldwasurrey.co.uk) to see more pictures of events, links to other groups and organisations, an archive of past events and lots of useful information

### **Editorial**

Apart from the usual reports and photos from some of our social walks and welcome to new members, this edition of the newsletter contains the reminder notice for the Christmas dinner. In addition there is an historic piece, written by John Wescott, of some of the background work that was/is required for the Tanner's Marathon. There is also a report of the Challenge Walk, Dorset Duddle. This has been included not only because one of the Surrey Group members not only completed the walk but also wrote about all the trials and tribulations that she endured.

### **New members to the Surrey Group**

The following members have joined the Surrey Group since our last Newsletter. Please welcome them on our walks

Paul Field	29675	West End
Clara Halket	29592	Lightwater
Susie Hawkins	29832	Aldershot
Sarah Jackson	29603	Bordon
Richard Lo	29938	Woking
Joanna & Tim Williams	29739	Bracknell

### **Xmas Dinner and Walk**

#### **Saturday 11th December 2010**

Everyone should have received booking forms by email. If you haven't, then please contact Janet on 01276 65169/07770 807137 email: janet@the-chapmen.co.uk  
To avoid disappointment don't delay - the cost is the same as in 2009 with an agreed special discount for Surrey Group members spouses/partners of £23 per person

Please send cheques for full amount when booking. Bookings to be received no later than November 6th. Cheques to be made payable to LDWA Surrey Group. Sorry no payment on the day as the account has to be settled in advance with the Hurtwood.

Please remember to indicate on the Booking form your menu choice.

Final details for the walk including the start location will be on the web & sent out by email at the beginning of December.

Hope to see you there.

Jan

## THE WINTER TANNERS

The Winter Tanners will continue to be held. The 34<sup>th</sup> will be on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2011 and entry details will be available shortly on the website of the Surrey Group of the Long Distance Walkers Association [ldwasurrey.co.uk](http://ldwasurrey.co.uk) or can be obtained by sending an SAE to Fiona Cameron, 35 Gardenia Gardens, West End, Woking, Surrey. GU24 9XG.

If short daylight hours and the likelihood of winter mud does not appeal to you but you would like to walk the route at some other time, the route description is posted on the above website shortly after the event has taken place. In fact all details available about the routes of the Winter Tanners since it started in 1976 (including most route descriptions) are recorded here. Click on “archive” then click on **\*\*“Health warning, disclaimer and copyright”** back to “archive” scroll to “Winter Tanners” click on **“route”** for the appropriate year.

The archive is a historical record of the Surrey Group's various events and the route descriptions are shown as they were prepared to be used on the day. There has been no attempt to update them or for that matter to rectify any mistakes subsequently found. This would defeat the purpose of the archive and to put it in the words of the webmaster “they are to be shown warts an all”.

Have a browse round the website. As a person who obviously enjoys walking in the countryside you are sure to find something of interest. If this induces you to join the LDWA the website you need is [ldwa.org.uk](http://ldwa.org.uk) click on “membership” click on “join” but again have a browse round the website.

*Fiona Cameron*

Tymba, a companion on many of our social walks



## Summer Jaunt with Corgi and Cakes      Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June

Thirteen set out from Ryka's Car Park on a Sunday morning in overcast weather under the leadership of Juliet and Harry the corgi. We followed the North Downs Way westwards to pass the vineyards – alas, too early in the year for wayside refreshment – turned south to cross the A25, and up through the fields and woods into the hills. Every now and then the sun would break through the clouds to light the Spring grass with a verdant green.

At a junction of tracks just past Squire's Farm we stopped for morning tea. There we discovered that some (all men, naturally) had not received our leader's telepathic communication that they should bring a packed lunch.



So, catastrophe: no beer and ploughman's for lunch! What were we to do? With feminine foresight, our leader had arranged for us to pass close to Leith Hill Tower so light refreshments were on offer. After lunch we continued south to Hartshurst Farm, then turned east, encountering an over-enthusiastic young Alsatian that was seen off by an affronted Harry. After a trek alongside a field of ripening wheat, again with beautiful Spring colours, we turned north again, walking through meadows and woodland, then climbing into the forested hills of Redlands Wood. We stopped to admire the views of distant places - was that really the London Eye? Then down to Dorking where Frank awaited us with a smiling welcome, teapot in hand and a splendid variety of cakes: chocolate, lemon drizzle and fruit. The fruit cake was laced with brandy, and some walkers were observed to have a slight weave to their gait after tea. Mindful of our figures, our thoughtful leader had chosen a route designed to burn off all those excess cake calories for the final stretch. The last four miles took us through the alleys and backstreets of Dorking, across the Mole, then straight up Box Hill. We climbed the 450 feet, stopped at the top to admire the view (always a good excuse to get one's breath), then strolled down the other side to the car park. Thanks to Juliet for an interesting and pretty route showing off the variety of landscapes and beauty of Surrey in early summer - and for the afternoon tea stop.

*Elton Ellis*

## From Oxon to Bucks and Back      Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> July



In anticipation of another hot day Reg had been invited along in the role of paramedic to supply water and for his faithful car to act as blood wagon if any of the twelve walkers from Surrey, Thames Valley, and Essex & Herts plus one dog an immigrant from India, fell by the way side. Fortunately no one collapsed but the 'holy' water was received gratefully on route. The walk was billed to start at 0845, but as John Lay wished to go on his annual exploration to the start via Maidenhead, Richard one of the leaders waited, while the rest of the group led by Avril visited Peter Saunder's Memorial seat at the lock. Peter an LDWA member who walked with the Thames Valley group had sadly died in December 2006 and was fondly remembered by the Surrey Group.

The one time when TLC was needed was 500 yds into the route; along the Thames when Janet tripped over Jim's boots and fell gracefully (if anything Janet ever does could be described as graceful) to her knees. After gaining her equilibrium and returning to an upright position, her knees could only be described as bloody. However being the stalwart soldier that she is; she refused offers of medical help and continued. For the next fortnight she looked like 'Just William' earning the name of scabby knees.

The group were pleased to meet John Dixon who joined the walk at Mill Lane, just before the morning stop at Hambleton. As the next section of the walk over to Fingest promised to be hilly, one of the leaders guided the walk round the hills, mistakenly believing that the diversion would not be spotted. It was spotted by an honorary third member of the leader's group who having checked the walk three times, raised the alarm that 'this was not the way'.

On reaching the pub in Fingest the group were joined by the Paramedic. After lunch the Chiltern Hills could be avoided no longer as the return route to Henley took the walkers through Stoner Park, Bix Bottom and Assenden.

Before the final mile back along the Thames Path was enjoyed, afternoon tea and cakes as was befitting to Henley were consumed by all but two of the group.

Thank you Avril and Richard for a fun day out.

*Janet Chapman*

## In the Steps of the Wessex 100, Pt1

Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> August

This was the first in a series of walks following the route of the 2009 Wessex 100. On an overcast morning with the hint of rain some 30 walkers gathered at Anstey Park, Alton for a walk through the Hampshire countryside. As well as members of the Surrey group there were walkers from both Wessex and Sussex. Janet, our leader, had her priorities right, sorting out who was lunching in the pub so that she could warn them we were coming. The drive down the A31 was enlivened by the local Triathlon Club holding a cycle time trial along the dual carriageway, with the speeding cyclists clad in colourful Lycra, aerodynamic helmets and riding space age carbon-fibre bikes. This show of speed must have inspired some of the group as they set off at a brisk pace which lasted throughout the day, and Janet had her work cut out to keep everyone together.



As we walked across Anstey park the bells of the local church, the Church of the Holy Rood, rang out to cheer us on our way and the skies started to clear and the sun broke through. We passed under the busy A31 and were soon into the countryside, following the Hangers Way, named after the series of steep sided wooded hills that it follows. Our first climb was through Monks wood, over the ancient earthworks, dropping down the other side, through East Worldham to the foot of King John's Hill, and a brief stop for refreshments. King John's Hill is another Iron Age Hill Fort, although the link to King John is somewhat tenuous it being Edward the Third who had a hunting lodge built there.

The next part of the walk was a succession of wheat fields, interspersed by woodland, followed by apple orchards as we approached Selborne. As we paused for breath at the top of Rhode Hill we had great views over the valley, and the series of white domes near Oakhampton that house tracking devices for the Skynet military communication satellites. Selborne was the place for lunch, in the aptly named Selborne Arms. We occupied the well appointed and sunny garden, and sampled some good food and well kept real ale, and were kept cool by the breeze from the wings of the myriad of wasps which befriended us.

After lunch we skirted the edge of Selborne Hill, avoiding the steep ascent onto the Common via the Zig Zag path, constructed in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century by the naturalist Gilbert White. Even so it was quite a climb, coming so soon after lunch. We progressed over rolling fields to the Farringdons, passing alongside Masseys Folly, "A Victorian confection of red brick and terracotta tiles, it sprouts in all directions and incorporates countless architectural features". Quite a sight.

From Farringdon we followed the disused track of the Meon Valley railway that ran from Alton to Fareham, arriving in Chawton and our stop for refreshments from the local tea shop, situated across the road from Jane Austen's house. The final part of the walk took us to the south of Alton, finally crossing under the A31 and back through some of the less scenic parts of Alton, to our start point, where Janet produced tea and cakes to finish off a most enjoyable days walking.

Our thanks to Janet for organising such a delightful walk

## **HARTING HOBBLE - Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> August**

Ten walkers gathered together on a misty, seemingly autumn morning, on the grass verge on the B2146 just outside South Harting. It was good to welcome the return of some of the newer walkers to the group, plus Celia who had not walked with the group before. However I did hear a comment to the walk being geographically conveniently located

The test of a successful walk is if they return!!

The walk followed the route of the Wessex 100 (do I hear yawns already?) along the SDW and up to Harting Down. At Beacon Hill it left the 100 route to skirt around Beacon Hill and onto the Mardens. There are a number of Mardens, Up Marden, East Marden, North Marden and West Marden where we eventually lunched. However during the day we seemed to visit many Mardens and their churches in fact those who were concentrating and not gabbing spotted that some Mardens and churches were passed more than once.

I have been reliably informed that according to the Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names, in W Sussex Marden means "boundary hill" which is a bit odd when the two of the villages are down in a valley. In Wiltshire, as if one might have known, the Marden is translated as boundary valley. In Kent it is a pasture for mares whereas in Hereford and Worcester it is an enclosed settlement.

The route between the Mardens was undulating but when the mist cleared we were treated to some splendid views.

Lunch at West Marden should have been at 12.45 but the tours of the Mardens resulted in a rather later lunch. It was a hungry, rowdy group that eventually arrived very wet and caked in mud from crossing many fields

In the pub Richard Ireson to keep himself awake was exceedingly noisy followed closely by John Lay, who was having difficulty hearing and believed that no one else could hear either.

As 10 miles had been walked prior to lunch various members of the group in consultation with our leader devised a 5 mile return to reach the cars by 17.15.

Thanks Chris for a fun day out

*Janet Chapman*



## Into Sussex      Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> September

This was my first walk with the Surrey Group and hopefully not my last!

I arrived at Liphook Station and was immediately made to feel welcome in the group, which is such a nice thing to happen when you are turning up for the first time and not really sure who is who or what entirely to expect from the day, other than walking of course.

In all there were twenty humans and two Labradors, the weather was perfect and as we set off our gallant leader called back there was to be tea and cake at her house at the end – now that was an offer to look forward to!

The eighteen mile walk took us through sunken lanes, open fields, woods and farms; over stiles and a couple of obligatory bridges – naturally stopping at one for the group photo. There were views of Butser Hill and the South Downs, a sneaky peek at Roman Abramovich's estate and various cottages and houses that looked as though they should be on postcards or jigsaws. Lunch was at the White Horse in Rogate village or for the non-pub goers the village recreation ground which provided time for feet to be aired and assessed before heading back. There was plenty of wild life too with the pheasant population at it's peak and polo ponies coming to investigate the intruders in their field; there were enormous black pigs and a couple of cows that looked as though they were wearing toupees.

Whilst on the walk, I managed to glean a lot of information due to the various discussions going on about different types of walking boots, the benefits of walking with poles, how to stop swollen hands when walking, solving the mystery rashes that appear on ankles by the end of a walk and which is the best light weight high energy food, which turned out to be Coffee Mate – however, I may have the wrong end of the stick with that one!



I have to say here that it is such a delight to be able to turn up for a walk that has been well planned, thought through and lead. Having spent a lot of time walking solo and trying to read maps, get bearings and constantly wondering if I'm on the right path: it is a pleasure not to have to worry about it and to just be able to enjoy the company and glorious countryside.

Many thanks to Glenys Kirkpatrick for organising such a lovely day and inviting us all back to her house for tea and cake – how decadent, and such a fantastic way to finish off a superb day!

*Susie Hawkins*



## Mystery Madgehole Meander Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> August

### 7<sup>th</sup> in the Mini Winter Tanners Social Walks Series



Madgehole is a little cluster of half a dozen dwellings (hardly big enough to be given the status of a hamlet) with a lane and a byway forming a diversionary loop out of the west of Winterfold. This loop was used on the 1990 Winter Tanners. It includes a house called Smarkham (at the time called Smarkham Orchard) at which there was a checkpoint on the 1990 Tanners Marathon – the event becoming known by the TMA as “The Smarkham Orchard Tanners”.

Going back to my theme for the first 3 walks in this series, it could be argued the 1990 route went the furthest south-west the Winter Tanners has ever been but whereas with the cardinal points, it is easy to judge by the longitudinal or latitudinal position of a location whether it is further east, south, etc, the intermediary compass points are not so definite. In this case another candidate for the furthest south-west record is the 1979 Winter Tanners which went to a point further south but the extreme was not as far west.

The route of the 7<sup>th</sup> MWTSW series was mainly a conglomeration of various Winter Tanners routes including contributions of the Madgehole loop from 1990 and a short section to the west of Leith Hill from the 2011 event which so far has never been used on a Winter Tanners although both these sections were in the reverse direction from when they were/will be used on the main event

There were 11 members who assembled at Albury Heath to take on the 19<sup>1/2</sup> mile route I had planned. The weather turned out to be a mixture of pleasant sunny spells interspersed by dull overcast periods. The main thing was the rain kept away probably due to Jackie's foresight to include an umbrella among her equipment.

The route went what I call the back way out to Gravelpits Lane rather than the obvious way going through Shere. When I was checking the route I spoke to the man who resides at Gravel Pits Farmhouse. Having included his house name in many of my route descriptions I mentioned to him the discrepancy that his name board has Gravel Pits as two words whereas the those for Gravelpits Lane and Gravelpits Cottages show it as just one. He said he had never noticed this in the 20 years he had lived there but maintained his nameplate was the correct version.

Turning away from the line parallel with the North Downs, the route went out to Abinger Common where the morning break was taken in the pleasant atmosphere of the village green. Then a low level round Pasture Wood but instead of the more familiar outlet to the Holmbury area, an easterly direction was taken via a bridleway then a footpath to Leith Hill Road. It was on this footpath that the obligatory bridge photo was taken. The footpath goes under the bridge but the bridge itself is a private drive to a few houses. The 10 models for the photo (but not the photographer) clandestinely climbed the bank to take their places along the parapet looking round all the time to see if there was any sign of human life which may represent a challenge to their right to be there. They got back to the safety of the right of way without being discovered but as they walked away a vehicle drove over the bridge.

The route then turned south to more or less go parallel with Leith Hill Road to The Coach House, a familiar sight of many Winter Tanners marking what I consider to be base camp on that long climb from Upfolds Farm to Leith Hill summit but this time the route crossed that line still going south. Thence to the lovely descent through the National Trust property comprising Leith Hill (Rhododendron) Wood and Etherley Copse to the lunch stop at the Parrot, Forest Green. After ordering our food, we hardly had time to sit down before it was served – probably a record for quick service.

The early afternoon was mainly through fields taking a line along some pseudo Farms – Holmbury, Lukins, Radnor Place, Coneyhurst, and Wykehurst then to the Cranleigh Golf Club. The stile count over these fields was considerably reduced with the astute use of diversionary permissive? footpaths (well all the locals seem to use them!). Wypehurst Home Farm (a different farm from Wykehurst and may even be real) could be regarded as the conclusion of the pastoral part of the walk as the route took, what was now the obligatory northward direction, towards Jelley's Hollow – notorious for its 2 foot deep mud which used to be negotiated in the dark on the early Surrey Summits events.

The route veered off westerly again to avoid Jelley's Hollow and stay in the lee of the Greensand ridge for a little while longer during which the afternoon break was taken, still south of the ridge. As the cars were to the north, the climb to get over the ridge had to be faced and all ascents (including the one up Jelley's Hollow) are steep. I warned John of the severity of the climb but I understand when he got to the top he asked when the steep bit was coming.

The Madgehole loop led to Farley Heath then via Blackheath getting back to the finish at Albury Heath just before 5.p.m.

Although I plan these walks, my walking fitness these days is not good enough to lead them so my sister Olive and her husband Roy lead them for me. I write a detailed route description for the walks, in this case I wrote a clockwise and anti-clockwise version. Olive chose to go clockwise. I try to include the lesser used footpaths/bridleways etc as much as possible. If anybody would like a copy of these route descriptions please email me or phone me (leave a message on the ansaphone if necessary). The walks are always mid week but maybe they could give ideas to walk leaders to arrange a walk to be included in the Surrey Group programme at the weekend.

*John Westcott*

[johnwestcott2003@aol.com](mailto:johnwestcott2003@aol.com)

01276 856672

## **A Dose of Epsom Salts. Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> August**

Starting from one of the gates on the north perimeter of Nonsuch Park, it didn't take us very long to walk the half-mile to the site of Nonsuch Palace.

All that remains today is a tree-lined avenue that passes across the original site with a 'commemorative' information board. It is quite easy to imagine when, some 400 years ago Henry VIII decided to build a convenient set of changing rooms to support his enthusiasm for hunting; in those days the Park covered vast tracts of land and stretched northwards as far as Richmond and beyond; these were taken over by the Royal Household for this purpose and the nearby village of Cuddington was demolished and housed elsewhere.

The Palace cost £24,000 to build which, converted to today's rates, would be equal to £104 million.

From the Park we made our way on various enclosed paths and alleyways on a steady upward gradient towards the Downs, passing by immaculate greens and fairways of Epsom Golf Club en-route until eventually reaching a convenient Tea Hut at the top by Tattenham Corner over looking the racecourse.

Suitably refreshed we continued south and heading out across the course; halfway across we met up with a very courteous Course Marshall who informed us that today was race day and that we needed to be aware of galloping horses that were practising on the gallops and as it was just one hour before the first race would be please clear off!

Once off the course boundary we turned left downhill along the valley. At Langley Bottom Farm our arrival caused some sheep to start a bleating chorus and then, passing some intrusive silos we trudged uphill across a field of stubble to meet the horse margin that has been thoughtfully provided alongside the hedge that hides the busy Langley Vale Road.

Half a mile further along this horse margin we were over taken by a posse of five young colts, still steaming after being put through their paces on the gallops, they were still quite sprightly but the stable lads and lasses had them well under control as they made their way back down the hill to Thirty Acre Barn ahead of us.

A last sight of Headley Church from the hilltop at Shepherds Walk before we turned north towards Ashted Park and from there picking our way up part of the Downs Link path towards Epsom Common and the site of the old Wells.

Epsom became famous during the early part of the seventeenth-century as a Spa Town. Tradition told how the healing powers of the waters were discovered in 1618 or thereabouts. A farmer called Henry Wicker was looking after animals on Epsom Common in a dry summer when there was a shortage of water for the cattle, he found a trickle of water in a hollow hoof print of a cow, and dug a square hole about it before taking the animals home for the night. Returning the next day he found the hole he had made was full and running over with clear water, but his cattle, however thirsty, would not drink from it because of its mineral taste; he tried the water himself and, by doing that, became the first person in history to experience the beneficial effects of Epsom Salts. Our path took us past the supposed site of the original Wells which is now capped and commemorated with a small monument.

After lunch we continued across Stamford Green and through West Park Farm to pick up the Downs Link path again that took us through the relatively new Horton Country Park to eventually join the path beside the Hogsmill that meandered its way back towards Ewell village.

From here it was just a short saunter back to the car park for tea.

Thank you Sarah for the wonderful selection of cakes at the finish and to John for leading us on such an interesting walk, full of history and turf.

*John Lay*



Ready to start



Gillian in the corn field

## Montgomery 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> October

This year's walking weekend was based in Montgomery, a small market town on the Welsh – Shropshire border, staying at the Dragon Hotel, an excellent hotel well used to satisfying the needs of walkers. Montgomery is a delightful town that still retains its Georgian street layout. The church, dedicated to St. Nicolas, contains the Elizabethan tombs of the Earl of Montgomery and his wife. There are medieval remains in the church and three phases of expansion can be clearly seen though the tower was only built in the mid nineteenth century. There are many Georgian and older buildings still in use. There are no supermarkets in the town and no outlets of other nationwide shops. The ironmonger's, as befits a market town, sells almost everything including items that are unavailable elsewhere. There is also a fine local museum.

Although it hardly rained, it was misty all the time so the views from the high ground were severely limited. On the Sunday we could just see Stiperstones to the east but there were no glimpses of the mountains of north Wales.

Our first walk, led by John Lay, was on Friday afternoon and covered a distance of eight km (five miles). In this short distance we had an ascent up to 248m ((813 ft) and another to 320m (1050ft), a walk through an iron-age fort, Ffridd Faldwyn, a visit to the remains of the mediaeval Montgomery Castle and a war memorial on Town Hill that had to be repaired after earthquake damage in 1990. It was on this walk that we had our first taste of the footpath problems in this region. There is little correspondence between the map and the ground; in addition stiles are in bad repair, finger posts are largely non-existent and paths end in barred gates, impenetrable hedges or barbed-wire fences. On one occasion there was a relatively new footpath sign at the side of the road pointing over a field followed in 2m by a barbed-wire fence and no visible stile or gate!

The walk on Saturday was led by Chris Haywood and was intended to be a 20 km (12-mile) exploration of the countryside southwest of Montgomery. It started out on the same route as Friday's walk but skirted Ffridd Faldwyn and went south on field paths with the aim of having a pub lunch in a tiny hamlet called Sarn before returning over Town Hill to Montgomery. Footpath problems occurred after the first half hour and it was another two hours of thrashing around in fields before a road was reached that could provide an alternative route to Sarn. This first leg of the journey did include a walk through a field of maize that was taller than the tallest man in the group but it is relatively easy to walk between the widely spaced rows of maize even if you cannot see where you are going! Because of the time that had been lost, the last leg of the morning's route was completed by road. The route back to Montgomery was much better with a decent footpath, marked on the map as a track, and no more thrashing around in fields.

Sunday's walk, again 20 km (12 miles), was led by Dave Challenger and explored the countryside east of Montgomery. The walk started out from the hotel and went through Lymore Park to meet Offa's Dyke. This park had contained a noted country house but the owners, important local gentry, fell on hard times in the 1930s and they had to sell up. However no one wished to purchase the house so it was destroyed and there are no remains to be seen. Offa's Dyke was followed north to the village of Forden. The walk along the dyke was to prove the most pleasant part of the day, good underfoot, well sign-posted with modern gates that could be opened and closed with ease. The intention now was to move in a southerly direction over the fields to Chirbury and then turn west back to Montgomery. Almost immediately the footpath problems of the previous days were encountered and overcome as well as possible. In one case a farmer told us that a path was a permissive path but it required climbing over a rickety gate and wading through thick mud to reach firm ground. This mud resulted in one of the party falling to his knees and having to be 'rescued' by two strong men. Even then the route was not clear and further fences had to be crossed before reaching a farm track. Better ground was found for the route back to Montgomery.

Our thanks to John, Chris and Dave for looking after us in trying conditions.

*Peter Waterhouse*

## DRAWING PINS AND LITTLE YELLOW ARROWS



I do not know anything about the first 16 Tanners Marathons so I am a late starter by beginning with the 17<sup>th</sup> (1976). On that occasion I did the easy bit by only taking part! I completed the 50 miler This story however starts six months earlier, 11<sup>th</sup> January to be precise, that was the date of the first Winter Tanners. That was the memorable day I met the late Alan Blatchford, a man I greatly admire and who, in the four years I had pleasure of knowing him, had a great influence on how I have lived my life since.

The early Winter Tanners were a first walk-out in January of the proposed route for the Tanners Marathon the following July. It was as such in the Long Distance Walkers Association (Surrey Group) programme. There were armchair notes and the inevitable AWB sketch map available for those who wished to round at there own speed but in the main the idea was to stay in a group with Alan leading. As with so many projects that Alan started, the Winter Tanners was a great success and with the numbers taking part it soon obvious it deserved the accolade of being an event in its own right. So it became one of the Surrey Group's major challenge walks and needed a surveyed route description. I undertook to do this. Alan would give me a map tracing out the route from which I

I prepared the route description for The Winter Tanners then, in turn, with a little modification, it became the route description for the Tanners Marathon.

I understand it had been the practice to waymark The Tanners Marathon route before I came on the scene and in view of my familiarity with the route, Alan asked me if I would do this with those famous yellow arrows. In the first year I only did about  $\frac{2}{3}$ rds of the southern section but I apparently did such a good job that the following year I was asked to waymark the whole route. When I was good I used to put up all the arrows for the 30 mile route on the Saturday starting at 4.a.m. and finishing about 8.30 to 9.p.m. Then on the Sunday, after the runners start, I went round taking the arrows down usually catching up the last walkers to act as sweeper. This standard of athleticism obviously could not last for ever and when I had to include a torch in my equipment I came to the conclusion that the advancing years were imposing a restriction on my abilities. Fortunately this coincided with my retirement so I could do a little bit towards the project on the Friday and if necessary, the Monday. In later years my sister Olive and her husband Roy have been enlisted in the "worshipful company of arrow putter uppers" to help me. Although the arrows are a minor part of my involvement in the Tanners Marathon, probably, to most people who take part, they are a most significant aspect of the event. They have certainly become a tradition and it would not have been the same without them.

On one of my taking down sessions, I was approaching a checkpoint at Starvealls Car Park ( $\frac{3}{4}$  mile west of Leith Hill summit) near enough to the closing time to think the marshals may still be there. I saw the empty drinks table next to a car with a man rummaging in the boot – obviously putting the checkpoint equipment away. “Have you got a drink for a thirsty man who is having a 'arrowing experience” I said. “Er, yes” he replied looking rather surprised and prepared an orange squash which he gave me in a rather ornate cup – very posh for use on a checkpoint I thought to myself. I asked him how the event had gone and it soon became evident he did not know anything about The Tanners Marathon. It turned out the checkpoint officials had not had room to take the table away so had left it there to be collected by another vehicle.

The procedure mentioned in the last line of the 2<sup>nd</sup> para above, hardly lasted long enough to be regarded as a routine because sadly Alan died in September 1980. He had given me the route he wanted for 1981 just 3 days before. Barbara Blatchford took over deciding the route and letting me have a map tracing for me to develop the route description. When Barbara left the TMA, I took over devising the route. So for the last 20 years, if you strayed from the route and insist it could never, under any circumstances, be your fault, you have me to blame for everything – the route, the description and the marking.

In devising the routes, I have tried to continue the policy established by Alan and Barbara to use as many footpaths as possible, make the routes as different as I can and to use at least 1 footpath etc never used on a Tanners before. With regard to the latter, I can only guarantee back to 1976. The restraints of using Leatherhead Football Club for the venue and Tanners Hatch Youth Hostel for the last checkpoint year after year means aiming at the same area for the route and therefore same paths get used but by using different combinations, walking in reverse direction and using as many areas about 12 to 13 miles from Leatherhead as I can reach on a logical cross country route, gives a fair element of variety I seek.

4<sup>th</sup> July 2010 was the 50<sup>th</sup> and scheduled to be the last Tanners Marathon. It is sad to end what has become a way of life over the weekend of the first Sunday in July and I will miss it but it is becoming a bit of a struggle and would have had to reduce my commitment had The Tanners Marathon been continuing. I shall still be devising routes and preparing route descriptions for the Winter Tanners for the time being so I will continue to have the pleasure of roaming the lovely hills, valleys and villages of Central Surrey that have been a familiar backdrop to exploiting my love of walking in the countryside over the last 30 odd years. Of course, I have the advantage of choosing the days I go out to walk the route so see the scenery to best effect.

I now go back to where I started to the man who was the inspiration for The Tanners Marathon yet only saw less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  the 50 years of its story unfold. Alan Blatchford was 6 days younger than me and I often think of him as I go about the task of surveying the Tanners route and deciding how best to combat the imaginations of the walkers who insist on misinterpreting my the route description. In particular I reflect on the years of life I have had which were denied to him. In his 44 years, he selflessly devoted much of his leisure time so that many of us could enjoy **our** leisure time. He had the outdoor activity equivalent to the Midas touch in that it seemed everything he started became a success. I wonder how much more he would have achieved if he had been allowed a reasonable lifespan

*.John Westcott*

## Our first Dorset Duddle

I guess I did not get off to a great start, when I discovered a couple of days before the event. I had booked our B & B at the wrong end of the event – Weymouth, AND I had paid for the coach to get us from Swanage to Weymouth!

Never mind, it was a good excuse to get out our tent that we had not used for 10 years. The campsite located near town and the tent pitched before the rain started. We met two fellow walkers in the pub for a meal and one of the issues we discussed was – footwear. I was sticking to my sandals which I walk in ALL summer, so that made two of us wearing them (Little did we know what a mistake this would be!) After the meal, we squelched our way back to our little tent, once inside all was very cosy with just one minor problem – we could not zip up the door, the tent fabric had caught in it! This necessitated a return to the car to collect a pen-knife to cut the offending fabric, hey presto, door now closed. A hole in the tent door and a wonky zip did not stop us having a fitful night's sleep under canvas in the rain.

Up early feeling bright and sparkly, tent flattened and unceremoniously shoved into a bin bag to load in the car, then off to catch the first coach listening to the buzz and chatter of other walkers and runners. Off we went to Weymouth by road in the comfort of a seat to the registration.

The route description was basic and you had to make sure you kept following it closely and not becoming complacent, as happened a couple of times to us, leading us well off course and taking the VARIATIONS!! **As written on the web site** - (The route is to simply follow the coastal path but do take a map as there are some variations that can be taken if required) I think we were one of many that took variations that day on the official route.

It was a testing course in places, with some seriously steep hills, up and down. But the one thing that tested us ALL - was THAT MUD!

The weather was drizzly rain on and off all day, but too warm to wear a jacket. When we did get glimpses of the views, which were rare with the low cloud and rain, they were lovely. I don't think it mattered whether you ran or walked, the mud was like being on an ice rink. This made for interesting negotiations around some of the narrow paths with very sheer and long drops to our right, with winter mud weighing down our shoes (or sandals) I was the mad woman that wore sandals for the 33.6 miles yes my feet were filthy, but there was also a mad man behind (as discussed over a pub meal) also in sandals – This is his version from his girlfriend - If anything they were worse!

”He didn't have any shoes on at all for the last six or seven miles and just put them back on for the walk into Swanage. He fell over SO many times that from the waist down he looked like a mud baby! Honestly I sound like I'm exaggerating but he must have fallen over 50 or 60 times - it was so dangerous really and he should have pulled out but he doesn't do 'giving up' – he should learn! To go back into the B and B he put waterproof trousers on to cover up the mud in case we bumped into the landlady! I think he's going to throw everything he was wearing into the bin - the mud is so ingrained that it won't come out – Richard ‘D’

Those steps, up and down, all I can say is, someone has gone to a lot of hard work to install them, they were studied very closely as we climbed slowly up them, with our noses to the ground.

All in all it was quite some day, I have heard many stories on how good this event was and was not disappointed. Duddle – no, tough – yes, views – nil, friendly marshals –incredibly, as some of them had long cold stays at their checkpoints. I want to say a **personal** thank you to the marshal sitting on his own in a field at the bottom of a long flight of steps, under an enormous brolly eating his sarni's. He was, SO, cheerful as he gave us directions across the grass field to the checkpoint. As the finish took us along the sea front, this was a brilliant opportunity to stand in the sea and wash ourselves off. This seemed to amuse the local holiday makers as we splashed in the shallows washing legs and shoes. At least we arrived at the church hall all cleaned up and very much ready for hot meals waiting.

Thank you to all that helped on the Dorset Duddle and yes, we will be back, next time to do it in better conditions.

*Jackie and Ted*