

Seconding the London to Brighton Walk

One of the problems that became apparent last year, and indeed on the previous year, with regard to the number of walkers who completed the London to Brighton Walk was that the failure rate had increased substantially. This obviously was partly due to the weather, but perhaps more importantly was due to the fact that a substantial number of the walkers were novices and more importantly that those looking after them, were probably novice seconds as well!

In view of this, it seems appropriate to produce a note which is designed to try and help seconds to achieve the goal of getting their walker to Brighton.

The most important point seems to be that the seconds are not really aware of the speed at which their walkers are proceeding and therefore the length of time it takes them to walk, what seems a relatively short distance in a car. It needs to be remembered that when a second drives ahead for, say, 10 minutes he can cover a large distance and it can take a walker at least 20 minutes or more to cover the same distance. When it is extremely hot, although this is true even in less humid conditions, the average walker, particularly a novice, requires regular looking after and indeed when it is hot, liquid perhaps every half to one mile at the very least. There is no doubt that most people dehydrate remarkably quickly and with the last two years being exceptionally hot, this has been more than obvious. It should be remembered that even those at the front of the field, find the conditions difficult, but they overcome the problem by having regular seconding and taking plenty of liquid. Surprisingly the liquid sweats through the system very quickly, so it is rare for a walker to have to make a pit stop, but a second should not discourage someone on this course of action if necessary.

Although seconds are not allowed to give liquid before Streatham Bus Garage, approximately 6 miles, after this they should be looking to ensure that their walker is well watered and fed where necessary.

For those seconds who choose to look after their walker on a bike, it is important to be well organised, either a bag or a basket on the bike with everything that is reasonably likely to be required by your walker. When feeding, the second should ride ahead, park his bicycle, and then walk or run back to the walker, and give him whatever assistance he requires. It must be remembered that you should not, at any time, be seen to be pacing your walker as he could be disqualified and he clearly will not thank you, especially if he has walked 40 or so miles!

Without doubt, the most important ingredient in the way of sustenance for walkers is liquid and you should encourage your walker to try and decide what he finds most comfortable. Drinks such as lemon, lemonade, orange, tea or water are clearly all suitable, some suit the walker more than others. Please bear in mind that the normal assumption of giving orange has not always been successful, as this is highly acidic, and therefore not usually good for the stomach. It can mean that your walker is doubled up within a couple of miles of taking a drink. For those who find problems with their stomachs, rice pudding and blocks of jelly are ideal for lining in the stomach and they also give energy relatively quickly.

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Glucose tablets are often used, but really need to be taken with liquid otherwise they can have a counter effect. Pieces of orange are often offered to walkers and in general are not very satisfactory as they tend to stick between the teeth and become highly irritating over a long race such as the Brighton, where the mind plays an increasingly important part in the battle to reach Brighton in time.

You should ensure that your walker has spare clothes, in other words at least one complete change of walking gear including especially shoes, and if his clothes become too uncomfortable there is no reason why a walker should not change and although this may take time, the long term benefits are probably worth the short term loss of time. In addition, in hot weather and indeed it is often hotter for the walker than experienced by those looking after him, sun hats, here a peaked cap is often helpful, sun glasses and handkerchiefs tied round the neck to cover the back of the neck are likely to give the necessary protection to the walker. If the sun gets to a walker it is quite possible that he will find it difficult to walk a straight line and clearly will be very vulnerable to the constant flow of traffic on the A23.

Other additional items which can help your walker include sponges, and these need to be wet, and possibly a towel should also be carried to wipe your walker down. Do ensure that you have a good supply of Vaseline, Ralgex and painkiller spray, all of which have been more than helpful to many of those who have walked to Brighton over the years.

It appears over the last few years that many of the novices have not had seconds who had any idea what action to take with blisters. Clearly a large blister becomes increasingly difficult to walk on and can not only slow the walker down, but possibly ensure that he retires, when if some action had been taken he could well have gone on and successfully completed the course. All seconds should carry a needle and cotton for blisters. Again it is not by any means wrong to encourage your walker to stop if he is clearly suffering substantially from a blister in order to put the needle through the blister with the cotton attached and leave the cotton in the blister so that the pressure and the liquid within the blister can drain away. This takes the pressure off the blister and has in our experience ensured that many people have completed the Brighton despite suffering considerably.

Seconds should encourage their walkers to try to ensure that not only do they know what liquid they would like, but possibly any food that they find compatible. Chocolate bars, sandwiches and other forms of food are taken in varying quantities by different people, but it is important to find what yours your particular walker. In giving a walker liquid, it is often advantageous to use a "baby mug" as this is much easier to take liquid through and stops air being taken into the stomach. If this happens, your walker can be doubled up in agony within a very short time!

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Without doubt, looking after a walker as a second is perhaps as difficult as walking to Brighton and certainly as tiring. You need to keep close to your walker at all times, especially as he may need help when going round roundabouts or through traffic lights. This is especially the case late on in the race and in particular when walking through Brighton where the traffic is often very dangerous.

Seconds must ensure that they and their colleagues behave according to the traffic laws as we have no wish to offend the police. Please be careful particularly of other walkers when parking, as the A23 is an extremely dangerous and fast road these days.

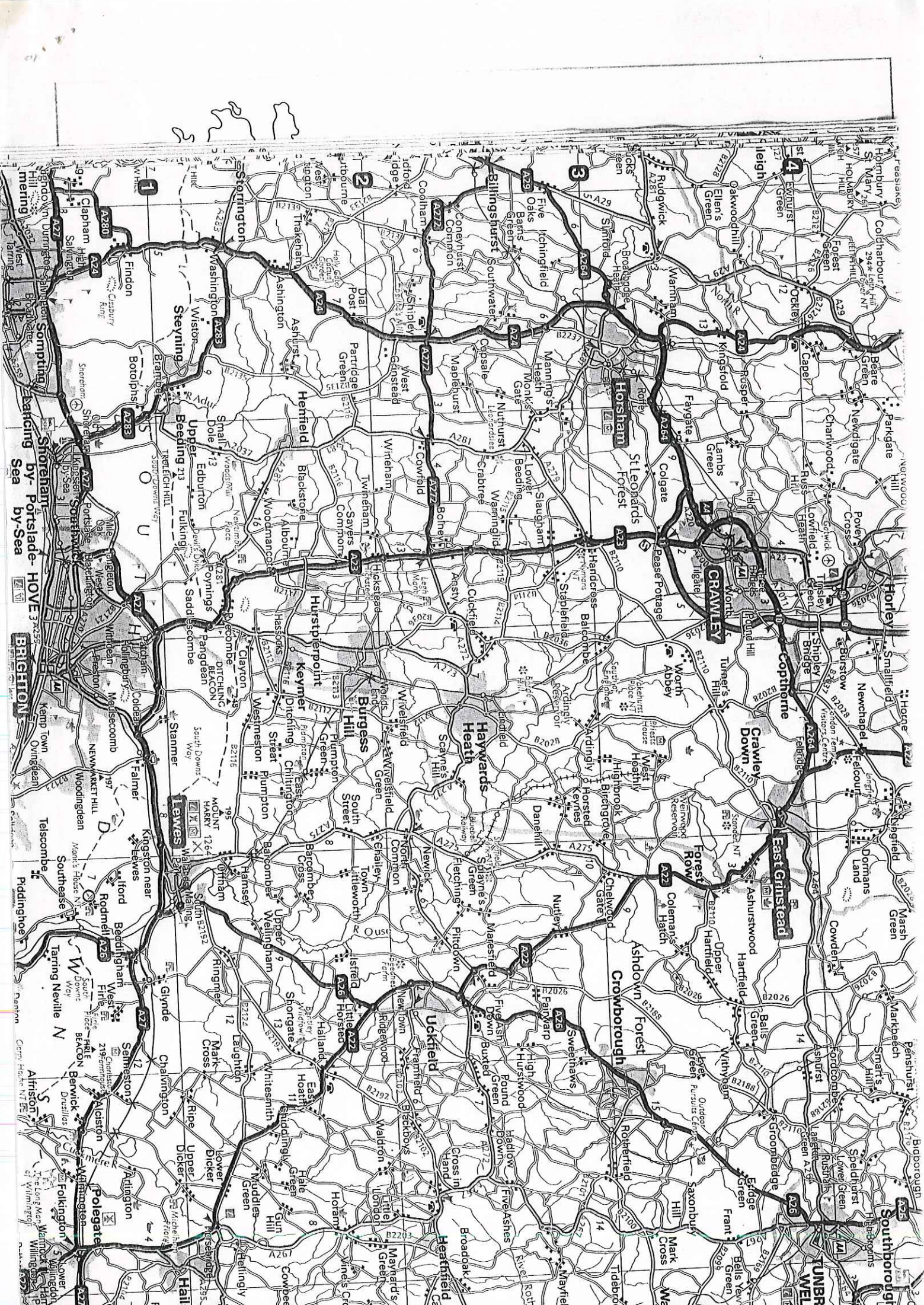
The second's job is to ensure that your walker goes the right way and gets there in the time. You need to be able to think for him, because he has more than enough to do in trying to achieve the distance in the time. He should not have to worry about the direction in which he is going or the speed at which he is walking and you can easily provide this information and ensure that he is making sufficient progress by using the information in the Stock Exchange Race Programme and other information from the checkpoints along the way.

In summary, seconding is a long and difficult job but clearly very satisfying if your walker achieves success.

For any further information, seconds or their walkers should contact the names given below, who will be more than happy to provide further help and advice prior to the big day on the 6th June:

A.H. Johnston, Greig Middleton & Co.

J.M. Harris-St. John, Gerrard Vivian Gray.



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Brighton
Lewes

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Crawley
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Southborough
Tunbridge Wells

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