



## 4gotten Pits – Peter Jull – April 2014

Early arrivers at Lydden church resisted the inveiglements of the local vicar to divert via nearby Temple Ewell to witness the Palm Sunday procession due that morning. So at the appointed time it was a party of seven plus Graham's dog Fenn that set off to start with the steady then steep climb out of the valley rewarded by a breath catching pause to look back at the grand view back across the upper Dour valley but then to be temporarily thwarted by an excessively stiff gate catch. Judicious application of some weight to the appropriate spot freed the opening into the next field which convinced the resident large flock of sheep that we must be concealing some turnips about our persons. Their attempt at swarming us was too hesitant and we escaped in time to saunter safely across the A2 through a long break in traffic and away again.

The next field crossing was aided by clear reinstatement of the path the alignment of which would otherwise have been dubious and disconcerting with the destination gap in the far hedge well disguised even only 5 yards out until Fenn in the lead disappeared though it This approach to Shepherdswell has been little frequented by the LDWA while the route out was the frequently recurrent North Downs Way but this time without the frisky horse that three weeks earlier had flicked a kick coming scarily close to Graham's head. Crossing the East Kent Light Railway prompted a discussion often returned to as we progressed about which routes it had taken to reach the pits we were to walk past. The NDW was left but we were still reversing a route by which Richard had led us late last year. A pause in a shady field corner to regather those who had fallen behind for the purposes of expelling liquid became an opportunity to take on liquid and indulge Fenn in her favourite game of stick chasing of which she never tired even though her entreatious posing was mostly ignored all day.



Richard's route was abandoned on entry to Fredville Park by diverging from the main track to exit opposite the path leading to Nonington School. Then another regathering and refreshment halt in its porch opportunistically offered a brief internal examination of the church by those interested. Leaving the village behind we passed the only other walkers encountered all day, a Bruderhof family clearly by their dress and accented greeting, Americans from the nearby community residence. Goodnestone was purposely avoided in pursuance of diversity by searching out an unreconnoitred track round the back of the Park Gardens and leading past a field in which a farmer's cultivating tractor had attracted so many seagulls that distantly visible Ramsgate must surely have been denuded of its entire population.

Turning towards Wingham turned out to be the Four Pits route along which the footprints of those who survived this far in February's super soggy manifestation of it were now rocky hard mud indentations. Passing stables two inquisitive horses had to be coaxed away from the gate so we could continue through their fields. Approaching Wingham the Four Pits route was abandoned by turning right so we could take up the Millennium 100 route past at last the first of our 4gotten pits. Dwarfed by the grain silos of the animal feed merchant currently in occupation and largely hidden by screening hedges here was the least that would be seen of our targets.

Next stop was lunch at the recently reopened Black Pig in Staple which was also being patronised by an early member of Pink Floyd now turned local artist. The gentle sunshine and breeze of the morning was becoming more scorchio on the road to nearby Hamill and destination number two. Definitely dilapidated, its post pit purpose as a brickworks having been abandoned some years ago there was still enough to pose in front of for a photo. The approach to Eastry was by a generally straight and long track (Four Pits again) and departure by a generally straight and even longer minor road. This least interesting part of our day done a deserved drinks break was taken at a conveniently located lump of log.

From here it was down and up on a track then down and up on road and path before turning west across carpets of crunchy beech nuts. Soon it transpired that the long field approach to Eythorne had featured on the Ramblers 25th anniversary walk the week before but then it was into Waldershare Park by a path none of those participating had experienced before. A pause to admire the view along the feature avenue of trees turned into a last drinks stop then it was away from the big house by reversing the White Cliffs Challenge route to be.



By consensual view the most imposing remnant of mining heritage was soon found at Guilford Colliery where the main building has been converted into high class housing and renamed The Winding House demanding another posing pause for photos. Our last animal encounter was with some suckler Sussex with calves at foot who took an intimidating interest in Fenn but some gentle shooing safely revealed access to the exit gate. The oblique approach to the return crossing of the A2 was across cultivated fields without the slightest visual clue to direction but achieved without deviation. A dangerless ambled passage led into our only margarine field of the day despite the countryside views having been dotted with blocks of bright yellow. At the far side it was the final turn for home and as promised the best was left until last as spectacular valley views opened out and then our final 4gotten pit and the church just beyond could be seen in sinking sunshine reduced to gentleness again. While stickless Fenn chased rabbits instead we struggled with some barbed wire then posed in front of Stonehall to complete the photographic set before the final gentle road descent to the end.

