

LDWA London Walks 2011

Tues 27th December 2011 Peter Saw's Christmas Walk

Summary:

Norbiton to Richmond 20 miles. Start 0900. Finish 1630. 24 walkers showed up on this very mild and dry day. A welcome send off from Peter and Hilary Saw with mince pies. A walk including 3 rivers, beautiful parkland and of course a windmill after lunch in Morden Hall National Trust Park. A very enjoyable walk marred only by the river banks of the Thames near Richmond being flooded which meant a short detour on a main road.

Sat 10th December

20mls Peter Buchwald. 25 people.

Summary:

*The sun shone low in the clear blue sky
Transfiguring nature's vivid winter coat
Every green blade with its white frost cloak
And late toadstools grew in viridian verges.*

*We splashed through a muddy quagmire
Picked our way through fallen trees
Up the wooded flanks of a short steep hill
Supped beer and eat lunch in a country inn.*

*We walked to the tower at the top of the hill
Spent the afternoon under quiet, shady trees
We found a waterfall by a limpid stream
And finished our day under a big full moon*

Sun 4th December

19.8mls Leader Lonica Vanclay.

Summary:

16 walkers in total set off from Epping at 9am on our walk of 19.8 miles. The rain held off all day and the clouds were high and cleared a little towards the end of the day - so we had some fine views. Forest and fields alternated with big skies. To mark the festive Christmas season, mince pies and Lebkuchen were provided at the morning break - which meant we could all keep going to Abridge for a lateish lunch - a choice of pub or café and most of us plumped for the café. Good food - albeit terse service. Big day in Abridge as the Christmas tree was being put up and the lights were due to be switched on - fortunately some time after we had moved on. A colourful sunset and we were at Loughton at 4.30pm so many of us were home earlier than usual too. An enjoyable day.

Sat 12th November London Loop

23mls leader Jerome Ripp

Summary:

This was the 6th and penultimate walk in a series of walks around the entire LOOP that

began 3 years ago and will finish next year. A lovely day mild with some sun and more like late spring than late autumn with some splendid colours and lots of rural pleasures despite the proximity of urban sprawl, motorways and Heathrow. The number in the group changed several times as people both joined and left but in total 11 walked most of the way. From Hayes and Harlington we followed the Grand Union Canal and the Colne Valley all the way to our lunch stop at the Coy Carp in Harefield west. On the way we passed Stockley park created out of millions of tons of rubbish, Little Britain Lakes created out of old gravel pits, posts marking the old London boundary and used as staging posts for coal tax and other posts marking the distance on what used to be called the Grand junction canal. There is a lot of industrial and economic history in this area.

After lunch we left the waterways and headed east to climb some hills, cross some stiles and go through delightful woodland glades. Everything was going to plan until we entered Bishops Wood. On the map it looked short and fairly simple but on the ground it was quite different and very muddy in places. This lead to 2 nasty falls, much uncertainty and a lot of wandering around in the woods. Past Moor Park we climbed to a lovely viewpoint for the sunset and now it was a race against the fading light as we pushed on through Oxhey Woods and then out into a spectacular twilight view of Wembley and much of London. However we were now in the dark and the path had vanished so we improvised through fields and a fence crossing which involved some acrobatics/yoga/limbo dancing depending on your style. Finally into Hatch End but even here the roads were deceptive and it was 5.20 before we reached the station after a thrilling 23 miles.

Sunday 6th Nov Wye circular

18.6mls Nick and Judith Griffiths

Summary:

Nick & Judith's last walk for the Group before their departure to new pastures turned out to be a memorable occasion. The drama started early when their car failed to start, necessitating a hasty change to their carefully laid plans. This unfortunately meant a delay to the start of the walk & with the majority of the walkers already en-route a message was conveyed via smoke signals & bongo drums that they would have to amuse themselves for an hour. In the best traditions of the Group some of them took the opportunity to get a couple of extra miles under their belts, exploring the local environs. It was heartening on arrival to see that most had taken this unexpected setback in their stride (no pun intended) & that everyone was still in good spirits. One of the undoubted highlights of the day was that our furthest-flung member, Megan, had flown in especially all the way from Australia in order not to miss this momentous occasion proving that the dedication of our intrepid members knows no bounds (actually she was over here for a conference but nevertheless it was great to see her again). After stocking up at the local Co-op with supplies due to the planned pub stop becoming a casualty of the delayed start, the 17 walkers set off under leaden skies.

Nick & Judith had spent many hours devising this route & it proved to be a very enjoyable day apart from incurring the wrath of a local farmer for an allegedly open gate for which we were entirely innocent! One of the undoubted highlights of the walk was the number of cunningly, devious stiles we came across, each one presenting a different challenge. They certainly tested our abilities to the full but in some notable cases a complete lack of them.

For the final stretch we donned head torches & finally reached Wye at 5.45pm where the

majority took the opportunity to adjourn to the local hostelry for a well-earned pint or 2. Nick & Judith are to be highly commended for putting on such an exhilarating walk & if this is their finale it will stay long in the memory (Dave).

Sat 8th Oct Horsham Circular

22mls Ldr Jerome Ripp

Summary:

A very lively party of 14 took part in this lovely walk on a fine autumn day through parkland, woods and the Downs link disused rail track. A re-inauguration for one member, a pre wedding celebration for another and the humour of DW to keep our spirits high. There were some lovely buildings to be seen en route; the church at West Grinstead being prepared for the harvest festival with free lamb roast (dash, we got the wrong day for our walk); the manor house at West Grinstead, Little Stammerham Farm which was definitely not little and dated back in part to 1250 and the impressive grandeur of Christ's Hospital school. A short stretch of the A24 was a good way to waken any sleepy people, especially one who had arrived late and blamed it on the trains! In the late afternoon we made an ascent of the south face of Sharpenhurst Hill and admired the view from the 86 metre high summit. The return into Horsham was quite an adventure as the path went straight through the leisure centre complex (are we doing a Triathlon, said one) but all was sorted and as often happens with this leader the final mileage was 22, an extra 10% on what had been promised.

Sat 24th Sept The Great Pillbox walk

19.5mls Ldr Jerome Ripp

Summary:

A group of 9 set out from Fleet station and within a minute we are on a footpath heading south east round the impressive Fleet pond. Soon we are into army land with dire warnings about suspicious objects and lots of paths which are not marked on the map. Down to the Basingstoke canal for the first of 3 sections of this quiet waterway. South east to the edge of Aldershot over more MOD land and a break at the Wellington monument on Round Hill. Into a vast area of sandy heathland and little ridges which led to a fine view at Caesar's Camp and soon to Ewshot for lunch. From here we had the pillboxes about 10 including one in someone's garden and mostly in a very dilapidated condition. We were heading west and had another canal section and then the edges of 2 small villages of Dogmersfield and Crookham. The weather was very fine all day, sunshine and a light breeze. A final stretch of canal and then return to the sandy heathland and the other side of Fleet pond. A very quiet but enjoyable 19.5 miles

Sunday 18th Sept Founders Challenge Marshalls' walk

Ldr Gordon Parker 26mls

Summary:

14 people met at Box Hill & West Humble station & transferred to Steer's Field. The excuse given for their non-appearance by all those who had walked the Surrey Tops the day before was blown away by Mike Ratcliff who joined us after 4 hours sleep - Respect!

1 person opted for the shorter route; the remainder set off down the vertiginously steep slope to take a social approach to the 26 mile challenge. Making steady progress

throughout the day we paid homage to the Founders at the Pitch Hill Toposcope, agreed a few clarifications to Don Bolton's excellent route description and agreed what a wonderful walk this is. Our numbers were reduced by fraternal blisters & a super speedy Dad answering to his responsibilities , so there were only 9 of us at Dunley Hill Farm where we paused in the middle of a field to let a herd of cows - and their bull! - cross our path....

All went well until Tanners Hatch Youth Hostel when the leader's brain switched off with the result that we spent some time with the owls and bats and all arrived home an hour later than we had expected. These marshals will certainly empathise with the participants on the 23rd October.

Sat 10 Sep 2011 Chappel Beer Festival Walk

23 miles. Ldr Rob Myers

Summary:

I kept to the same format as last year with a 13 mile walk around Colchester in the morning. This started by going through Highwoods Country Park which my house backs on to. In fact there is an entrance to the park about 10 yards from my house so I could show the group where I lived. On leaving Highwoods we did a section of the Camuplodeum devised by former LDWA member Derek Keeble. After briefly popping into the grounds of Essex University we walked along the River Colne into Castle Park. We had lunch at the Castle Inn. In the afternoon there was a 9 mile walk to Chappel mainly along the Essex Way. Everyone was impressed by the magnificent Chappel Viaduct and we all posed for group photos. Some people left at Chappel Station where the East Anglian Railway Museum is situated and the Beer Festival took place. 6 of us went to the festival and tried some of the 450 beers available. There was a slight problem with food as the hog roast stall wasn't operating and the mighty sausage company stall had run out of sausages. Everybody else had a vegetable curry but as a strict carnivore I had a burger. Whilst we were eating our food there was a fairly heavy shower which sent most people scurrying into the Goods and Restoration Sheds of the museum. We stayed where we were and were rewarded with a superb rainbow when the sun came out. Four people departed at 7.30 and two of us stayed for a further hour. Two women stopped off at our table to eat their food and one of them turned out to be the chief brewer of Brentwood Brewery Company and we had a very interesting chat. The bad news, according to her, is that barley is a spring crop and the summer rain came too late to save it. She predicts that beer prices will soar next year. After briefly listening to the band in the Goods shed we decided to catch the free bus. The spirits in the bus were high and the passengers rendition of the Proclaimers 500 miles was truly impressive. Inspired by their triumph the passengers attempted a version of Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody which received mixed reviews. Rob

Sun 14th Aug Guildford to Godalming

Ldr Dave Williams

Summary:

24 turned up for my 20+ stroll , they were advised to bring their sense of humour & they certainly needed it! On a near-perfect day for walking the only highlight of the morning was the short break on top of Puttenham Common offering extensive views across to Haslemere & beyond. With nothing further to report we reached Farnham, our lunch stop where some adjourned to the pub, others to the fish & chip shop & the remainder to

partake of their packed lunch by the river. We departed after lunch with the promise of an ice-cream stop at Tilford, however to the leader's consternation the ice-cream van was nowhere to be seen! However when all seemed lost we managed to take advantage of one at The Donkey at Charleshill. With spirits restored the race was now on to reach Godalming in order to catch the 18.56 train & a brisk pace ensured we reached our objective in good time having covered some 26.5 miles!

A special mention must go to Judith who volunteered her services for the back-marker job & in spite of severe provocation stuck manfully to her task with great stoicism to the bitter end!

Sun 31st July Greensand Way Linear Walk Part5

21mls Ldr Susanne Waldschmidt

Summary:

18 walkers came out on a hot and sunny day to walk from Knole Park, Sevenoaks to Maidstone. The Greensand Way is a really beautiful and varied walk with lots of surprises. The Swan on the Green at East Peckham was perfect for a lazy summer rest. After lunch the mood of the walk changed when we left the Greensand Way to follow the River Medway to Maidstone. A little rushed at the end as we all were keen to catch the hourly train back to London.

Thank-you Mike R for taking over in Maidstone and getting us to the station by the quickest route with just minutes to spare.

Saturday July 9th West Essex Circular

22mls Ldr Lonica Vanclay

Summary:

Yes - this time there was no fog, the rain held off all day and it even got quite warm and sunny in parts! 15 of us walked the 20 miles and were able to enjoy the sweeping views, the green fields and the fantastic spread of flowers - wildflowers in the fields and the beautiful and colourful Essex garden flowers. Lots of lovely old houses to admire en route. The Dial at Elmdon provided excellent beer and lunch and we were able to sit in the garden to enjoy it. The ups and downs, gentle though they were, still rather put paid to the view that Essex is completely flat! So no need to repeat the walk for a third time!!

Sun 3rd July. South of Berwick

38mls Ldr Mike Ratcliffe

Summary:

This first Sunday in July was a stunning summers day and the South Downs were certainly a great place to be. Just seven of us started our walk from Berwick Station and just Dave Williams and I were the only ones to actually return there that evening with the others finishing at Seaford. Walking from the station round the southern shore of Arlington Reservoir we soon began our southward bearing towards the hills, aiming for The Long Man of Wilmington who looked down upon us from his hill in the distance. Up onto the higher ground we soon passed through Jevington then over some very

undulating but bone dry terrain to reach the coast at the Belle Tout Lighthouse near Beachy Head. Soon after this we had our first stop at Birling Gap where we all had a well deserved drink and some an ice cream too. We then continued the classic walk over the Seven Sisters and down into Cuckmere Haven, up to Exceat Bridge and back to Seaford Head before our descent into Seaford. We had such amazing views looking back east to the gleaming, brilliant white cliffs along to Beachy Head and the sea was a lovely shade of greenish blue, especially where it met the cliffs and mixed with the chalk. After Seaford there was only more walking for the indefatigable Mr Williams and myself and by now it was turning very hot and muggy indeed. We pushed on though up to Bishopstone, then across the Downs to the South Downs Way on the main ridge near Firle Beacon. After yet another bite to eat and more drink with a nice pause looking north with a delightful expansive view from the Downs we continued along the South Downs Way. We soon left it however to descend from the hills for the last time that day to cross a few fields into Berwick village and a very unplanned but welcome pub stop. Our final couple of miles saw us join the Vanguard Way and a final walk eastwards back to the station. A lovely but tiring days walk.

Saturday 18th June Shoreham by Sea

22mls Leader Jerome Ripp

Summary:

12 of us set out from the Sussex coast on a windy and rather dull morning with the leader saying that in view of the unsettled weather, the promised 22 miles would not be forthcoming. Little did we all realise how that prediction would be fulfilled. Up to the downs at Mill Hill nature reserve with some early excitement as we were almost mauled by some excited cows and managed to find a very long way through the reserve with several ups and downs. Order was resumed with the South Downs Way which was now followed all the way to our first ring of Chanctonbury with a view down into several bottoms on the way. A very late morning break and then the descent through woods to Washington for lunch. The weather had been fairly kind with only squally showers to accompany the stiff wind.

After an efficient stop at the Frankland Arms it was back into the hills and a pleasant route up to Cissbury Ring where we sank into the soft grass for a well earned 40 winks. From here however the walk went downhill both literally and metaphorically. The descending path was very pretty with a view over the golf course but it was not the intended path and suddenly we arrived in a residential area on the edge of a town which was not the plan. The leaders attempt to fight his way out of this mess by diving into the luxury housing estate was to no avail although we did pass the amusing Bacon For Sale sign. By now it began to look as if head torches and a tent might be needed but with Trevor providing some local knowledge, nerves were steadied and a plan made to get back on track. Via Sainsburys a path slowly emerged that lead back up into the hills and finally we reached our third ring of Lancing with a view across to the ornate college. A final descent and we just made the 18.40 train having covered a marathon of 26 miles. An epic walk according to D.W. which put this leader up with some of the greats.

Sat 28th May 2011 Facombe Foray

21mls Ldr Steve Singleton

Summary:

The forecast was for a mainly cloudy day with a possibility of showers and a fresh breeze. Thirteen of us, including several people new to the group, met at Kintbury Station, near

Newbury, for a walk over the Berkshire Downs to Facombe and back. Our start was delayed by latecomers, but by 9:45 we were on our way through Kintbury. Our route took us south past Titcomb Manor and across Inkpen Great Common, then south to climb over the eastern shoulder of Walbury Hill, which at 297m is the highest point in the Home Counties. It was cool and breezy on the ridge. We descended to Combe for elevenses, before re-ascending to the conspicuous radio mast on Combe Hill. A long descent to Combe Bottom followed, after which we walked west down the valley before climbing steeply again to Linkenholt. A walk across field paths took us to Netherton, from where there were three quarters of a mile on a minor road, uphill, to the Jack Russell at Facombe for lunch. Those who did not want to eat in the pub were able to use some rather worse-for-wear picnic tables by the village pond. Service at the pub was slow, and it was nearly an hour before we were able to set off again; the weather was grey, cloudy and breezy; those people eating outside got rather cold. After lunch a descent northeastward was followed by the last major climb of the day, over the shoulder of Pilot Hill. Our descent took us along the edge of a quarry, with a sheer drop to our left, then north to East Woodhay and onwards to Ball Hill. We carried on north through sunshine and showers to Hamstead Park, where the three people who had come by train sped on ahead to catch the 17:46 train, for which time was tight. Our route took us through the park to Hamstead Lock on the Kennet and Avon Canal for the last two and a half miles along the towpath. One of our party, who was suffering from severe blisters, decided to stay at the lock and wait for her friend to pick her up in her car; the rest of us made our way back to Kintbury, having covered approximately 21 miles with 2500 feet of ascent; we were pleased to find when we got there that our train travellers had caught their train.

Saturday 21st May. Stane Street Circular

25mls Ldr Mike Ratcliff

Summary:

Starting at Billingshurst Station fifteen of us took a clockwise route south of the town to cross the railway just east of the Roman road that runs from London down to the coast. We continued west through some quite lush green farmland that seemed healthy looking despite the recent hot dry weather and soon picked up the Wey South Path at Lordings Lock that took us north through some very low lying areas and at times along the route of an old canal. Reaching Newpound Common we had a short road walk then soon continued through more attractive farmland up to Malham. By this stage the sun was very strong and the sky seemed very blue. There was just enough breeze however to make things feel OK. We then took quite a contrived route that laced together a series of small winding paths that resulted with us continuing generally north to meet the Sussex Border Path near Rudgwick. Reaching our most northern point along the route we then began our walk down to Tisman's Common for a good lunch stop. We rested nicely there for an hour and were able to relax in the sun sitting in the pubs' garden. After an hour or so we continued our way south to cross back over to the east side of Stane Street at Five Oaks and then took a nice weaving bridleway that took us almost all the way back to Billingshurst. We reached the station in good time for the 18.01 train and with the sun still shining.

Sunday 15th May Alton to Farnham

17.5mls Ldr Lonica Vanclay

Summary:

It was a beautiful sunny day when 21 of us set off from Alton - the blue skies, warm sun, fresh bright green leaves and flowers throughout the day made for a bucolic English countryside day. And we had all sorts - a long cracked clay path through the young green wheatfields, forest, heathland - some of which had had a fire through a while ago and looked post apocalyptic; Frensham Pond with its sand and boats; streams and open fields. Lunch was at the lovely Dockenfields Inn - most of us had sandwiches. The barman said lunch would be 45 minutes (or was it 4 to 5 minutes the time in which Deep got his salad!) So Don settled for dessert only which also took 4-5 minutes and poor old Paul passed altogether as he didn't want to hold us up! Having admired the views we upped the pace a little in the afternoon - but still made time to watch cricket on the village green while we had icecreams. And still in time for the 4.30 train...but then it was only 17.5 miles with an average walking speed of 3.5mph.

So we've seen it all in snow and now in sun - perhaps I could get away with repeating it in the autumn in a few years time.

Sat 7 May 2011 Essex Way

20 miles. Ldr Rob Myers

Summary:

After 2 dry months there was heavy overnight rain and it was a great relief that it had stopped by the time the walk started and weatherwise it turned out to be a very pleasant day. 15 of us gathered at Manningtree station including 4 locals. From the station we climbed up to Lawford Church to join the Essex Way. We passed through the town of Manningtree and walked along Mistley Walls NNR to see the boats and mute swans on one of the more beautiful places on the Stour Estuary. From there we passed through the pretty villages of Mistley and Bradfield to rejoin the Stour, where we walked along the shoreline to reach Wrabness NR. I didn't think that the Essex Way did justice to the NR so I added a diversion up to the top of the reserve where we had a drinks break whilst enjoying views of the old Royal Naval School across the Stour on the Shotley Peninsular. From the drinks stop we passed by a green burial ground before arriving at All Saints Church. The church built in 1100 is famous for the fact that the bell tower collapsed in the 1700s and the bell was removed to a temporary outside cage where it has remained since. The group got spread out when members decided whether to buy any of the home made jams left by the roadside. Passing through Stour Wood and Copperas Wood we arrived at Ramsay and got good views of the Ramsay Windmill. Lunch was at the Castle Inn. The Castle Inn is a very quiet village pub which was bizarrely the scene of a 12 hour police siege in 1979 when someone held the landlord hostage. The siege did not end happily as police had to shoot dead the assailant. Anyway we all sat outside and enjoyed some good beer "Woodforde's Wherry" and some reasonably priced food. In the afternoon I added another "extension" to the Essex Way to include an additional 2 miles of sea wall around Hamford Water. After that Harwich gradually came in view. We passed the caravan site and the beach huts before reaching the lighthouses of historical Harwich where the walk and the Essex Way ended. A really enjoyable walk!

Saturday 16th April 2011 Forest Row Circular

Ldr Mike Ratcliff

Summary:

Ten of us made it to our starting point in East Sussex on a morning of disruption on the rail network though it was worth the effort I hope as the sun was shining for us early

that day and the conditions underfoot were excellent. We began our days hike walking west away from Eridge Station and towards Ashdown Forest, soon to pick up The Weald Way just north of Crowborough. Much of the mornings walking was characterised by patches of woodland that had some of the first bluebells of the season on display and a very green and lush feel to the whole area despite the hard and often cracked ground due to the distinct lack of rain over the previous weeks. When designing this route I was delighted to find such a terrific selection of ancient trees along the way which eventually seemed to characterise much of the walk. We stopped for a morning rest on a very distinctive area of heathland in the midst of the Ashdown Forest area just before we picked up The Vanguard Way which would take us all the way to our lunch stop at Forest Row. From this point we had a hazy but still spectacular view looking north to the Weald with the North downs rolling along the distant horizon. After some more miles of woodland and skirting round the enormous Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Club we eventually found our lunch stop at Forest Row where most of us spent an hour and more relaxing in the sun in the park near the centre of the town. After leaving the town we continued following The Vanguard Way to find a junction on top of a beautiful ridge to the north that meets the High Weald Landscape Trail. We now began our walk back eastwards, following the long distance path and eventually joining The Sussex Border Path which at this stage followed the course of an old dismantled railway. This provided the group with some flat and easy walking that lead us for a couple of miles or so to Balls Green where we finally took a more inventive route back over the hills near Withyham and Eridge that seem to run all the way eastwards towards Tonbridge Wells which was clearly visible in the distance. After a few more undulating miles back on The Sussex Border Path we eventually made it back to a familiar track that we had actually walked some of that morning when setting out and walked the final half mile back to the station in the sun.

Sat 9th April - West of Winchester

Ldr Jerome Ripp

Summary:

A record crowd of 27 gathered at Winchester, was it the glorious summer weather, the lovely countryside or possibly the charm and caring consideration of this modest leader as many of the ladies thought. The tricky bit was getting out of Winchester on the south through the wealthy leafy suburbs but once on the Clarendon way it was plain sailing and we climbed up and over Compton Down for the first of many superb views. A break at Hursley church for nutritional and spiritual sustenance and then forward now on the Monarch's Way into a vast woodland and finally north curving round through some lovely valleys to a well deserved lunch stop at King's Somborne. We had done 23 K in just over 4 hours. A long break was enjoyed by all at the pub or on the benches of the common or just meandering round this pretty town. Return on the Clarendon way through more woodland and views which each place being better than the one before. A stop at Farley Mount to see the monument to the horse and then we steamed on for the final section round the golf course on Teg down and so back to Winchester achieving the return of 6.20 having covered 24 miles.

Sat 2nd April -East Croydon to Coulsdon South

21 miles - 19/20 people. Ldr Peter Buchwald

Summary:

Feeling the joys of spring on a sunny day

*We meandered through suburban streets
Walked a drunkard's zigzag path
Through leafless woods, uphill and down
Until to Kenley came for lunch.*

*We waited long for slowly cooked food
Then continued past The Sun in Coulsdon South
At a church in Chaldon and a cruciform painted wall
We marvelled at Jacob's Ladder,
The sins of dancing girls and very rich men.*

*Past Alderstead Heath up to the North Downs Way
We walked through darkened woods
With panoramic views in grassy clearings
Until we stopped at Oxted for a pint of beer.*

Sun 27 Mar Fords and Hills of Herts Circular

20 miles Ldr Nick Marshall

Summary:

Despite losing an hour's sleep to the putting forward of the clocks, 21 people turned up on time and enjoyed a 20 mile circular walk from Ware in weather which became increasingly warm and sunny as the day went on. Nobody actually qualified for a free pint by walking through all three fords before lunch at the pretty village of Standon (if you want to know why, try looking up "Standon ford" on YouTube), but the three brave souls who did two fords got a pint anyway. The attached pictures illustrate a range of fording techniques, from Paul's Careful-not-to-create-waves, via Rod's I've-got-waterproof-socks-so-there, to Steve's "Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!" And at the end there was still plenty of daylight left in which to get home.

Sat 12th March Lewes Circular

20 miles Claire Kirkbride - 20 people

Summary:

The joint walk with Blackheath RA proved successful in forming links between our two groups; inspirational to the Ramblers and an insight for the LD Walkers, who warmed to the idea of stopping for 5 minutes every hour on this occasion. We were joined by a Rambler from Rodmell who left us within a few minutes, knowing a greener way out of Lewes town, which he has now taught me - turn right out of Lewes station ... We were quickly on the banks of the Ouse, mercifully free from mud and surprisingly sunny and mild despite a pessimistic forecast. We took a break outside the youth hostel in Telscombe and turned northwards onto the Downs, quickly into the Kingston valley for lunch. The sun was less in evidence in the afternoon, but the weather held fair as we walked through the western edge of Lewes onto the Downs by the Gallops, sighting Blackcap before descending into the Ouse valley north of Lewes and returning from Offham through the suburbs in hot pursuit of an ice cream van whose driver never sighted us and kept disappearing round the next bend in the road ahead! The scenic route through the town brought us through the Castle precincts and back to the station without a drop of rain.

Sat 5th March A Visit to 'Uphusband'

22 miles Ldr Jerome Ripp

Summary:

A bitterly cold day and even some sunshine kept the 14 of us going at a brisk pace all day. A frustrating start from Andover as massive new housing developments had obliterated some of the paths and we ended up on the road to Smanell. From there it was superb countryside to the north with woodland and then glorious views to the Purbecks as we followed the newly signposted Betty Parker Way, named after the devoted Ramblers campaigner. Lunch at Hurstbourne Tarrant (the Uphusband of the walk title, a media guru of 200 years ago) was at the George and Dragon, a lovely pub furnished as if it were someone's front room. The longer afternoon followed the Test way, over the hills to St. Mary Bourne and then south to the edge of Harewood forest. It was time to head west back to Andover which was reached in time for the 17.04 train having covered nearly 22 miles in 8 hours in a fine walking area.

Sat 19 Feb 2011 Cholsey Circular

22 miles. Ldr Steve Singleton

Summary:

It was a wet morning with rain forecast until lunchtime, and the leader was not surprised when only seven walkers, including the leader, were at Cholsey Station at 9:11 a.m. The rain stopped as we set off, however, and the remainder of the day was dry but misty, the mist serving to hide Didcot Power Station from our view. About an hour into the walk, the leader received a phone call to say that three more walkers were on their way, but had been directed to the wrong train at Reading Station; they would join us at lunchtime. Our route took us southwest from Cholsey, across the A417 and up Unhill Bottom, where unfortunately we had to negotiate a large field which had been ploughed since the route was recce'd. Shedding the mud from our boots we continued up to cross the Ridgeway, then followed paths in a generally southwesterly direction, descending towards Compton. A slight route-finding error by the leader brought us into the village further south than had been intended, but we found a pleasant footpath to get us back on route. From Compton we set off northwards, climbing to the Ridgeway again; we followed the Ridgeway west for a short distance before picking up paths past Churn Farm and over Churn Knob before descending into Blewbury for lunch. We met our missing three walkers at the Red Lion; they had been misdirected on to a train taking them back towards London, but had then caught a later train back to Cholsey and, lacking maps, had walked to Blewbury by road - full marks for persistence! Those who ate at the Red Lion reported that the food was very good; the remainder of the group ate their sandwiches at a grassy area with benches a short distance away. After lunch we continued west from Blewbury to Upton, then north to East Hagbourne, before turning east to pick up a long track south to Blewburton Hill, where we had a tea stop and admired the view. We descended southward to pick up a path going east to Aston Tirrold, then carried on back to Cholsey at a steadily increasing pace, dictated by the desire of some of the group to catch the 16:37 train; unfortunately we got there a couple of minutes after it had departed, having covered a total distance of approximately 22 miles. Steve

Sat 12 Feb 2011 Eastbourne circular

20 miles. Ldr Clare Kirkbride

Summary:

There was a good turnout (20) for Clare's social walk around Eastbourne starting at 10.15am. The weather was overcast and mild. We walked up to the Beachy Head ridge, and avoided the sea mist on the top by turning northwards along the South Downs Way towards Willingdon, with fine views of our afternoon route across the Pevensey Levels, descending through the day's only patch of greasy mud to the Wheatsheaf pub. Startled by 6 customers for lunch, the chef served us in due course, but the dishes were worth the wait, and we left our lunch spot within the hour. We took a very small detour to head east across fields which were reasonably dry underfoot then followed part of the Cuckoo Trail between Polegate and Stone Cross where we joined part of the 1066 Country Walk, diverting to admire the ancient buildings in Pevensey village including the two churches and the castle, which was in use from Roman times when the sea lapped the foot of the walls, till the end of World War II. We negotiated a little floodwater on the Pevensey Levels as well as a train at the level crossing before arriving at the Castle Inn in the village of Pevensey Bay for tea. The pub dog, a massive beast, was incensed by our hats (!) but the bar staff served us with generous helpings of good tea and coffee, before we emerged to tackle the trail along the shingle for half-a-mile or so. Thereafter, the station lay more or less an hour away, so the sprinters scorched ahead, and the leader dawdled with the last of the group, and arrived at 6pm. The ascent totalled 420m and the distance 20.4 miles. Clare

Sat 5 Feb 2011 Woolhampton Circular

21 miles. Ldr Steve Singleton

Summary:

Thirteen walkers from London and Thames Valley Groups met at Midgham Station (which is actually at Woolhampton) at 8:36 precisely on a windy February morning. There had been showers earlier on, but by the time we met, the weather was dry and cloudy; it was to stay like that all day. We set off on roads through Woolhampton, then picked up a path through Midgham Park to Midgham village. We carried on westward towards Colthrop Manor, with views over towards Thatcham, before turning north via Bucklebury Common to the Slade for elevenses. Jerome thought that the elevenses stop was well chosen, having sheltered under the same tree for lunch on a Thames Valley Group walk he led a few months earlier. We carried on north and east via the outskirts of Westrop Green and Frilsham, and then crossed the M4 to Yattendon for lunch. The four people who ate at the Royal Oak said that the food was good; the leader can confirm that the beer was in good condition, as it should have been as the brewery is just across the road from the pub! After lunch we carried on eastward, crossing the M4 again, to Bradfield Village, before following the valley of the River Pang upstream, and then turning south to walk through Chapel Row towards Woolhampton. This part of the walk was directly into the fresh wind, and without shelter! At Kiff Green Jerome decided to leave the group and hurry back along the road to catch the 16:24 train, as the trains were only once per hour. The others who had come by train went with him; the rest of us took a more leisurely route on footpaths and got back at 16:35, having covered approximately 21 miles. Steve

Sat 29 Jan 2011. Swalecliffe to Birchington

22 miles. Ldr Mike Ratcliff

Summary:

Twenty one of us met in the sleepy suburb of Whitstable that is Swalecliffe on a very

chilly Saturday morning in late January. The exposed north Kent coastline soon came into view within minutes of leaving the station while walking north through some residential streets. We took a right turn near the sea wall to begin a long stretch walking east towards Herne Bay with the remains of it's old pier appearing out of the sea like a ship approaching the town. After reaching Hampton Pier, the centre of the town became more conspicuous while we made our way past many beach huts and then seafront cafe's and amusements. Passing through Herne Bay we continued our way along the Saxon Shore Way to Bishopstone where we left the coast to take a southerly route bringing us now inland across our first fields of the day with super views looking south down to the low agricultural land of the Thanet Peninsular. Following the Wantsum Walk we soon crossed the Thanet Way and closed in on the tiny hamlet of Boyden Gate where we began our most desolate stretch of walking of the day across the Chislet Marshes towards our most southerly point at Chitty and eventually to Sarre in the east where we stopped for lunch. The day was cold, grey and overcast all morning until this point where we began to see the first chinks of blue sky with some encouraging beams of sun warming the mood of the place as we relaxed for some well earned food and drink. We had by now completed twelve miles and leaving the pub for another ten, we left Sarre to walk north, once again picking up the Wantsum Walk. This gradually guided us back up to the A299 near St Nicholas at Wade and then over more low reclaimed farmland towards the stunning towers of Reculver which had been within sight from different angles all day, standing proud on the cliff top between Herne Bay and Margate. Reaching this nodal point of the walk with it's mixture of ancient Roman and medieval ruins we began our final push eastwards to our eventual finish at Birchington on Sea which lies on the western edge of Margate. As the terrain was so exposed with the freezing North Sea to our left and the bleak open expanse of Thanet to our right, there was no shelter from the elements at all for the last few miles which gave our group a rather interesting twist to the day as the wind was still blowing from the north east as it had done all day but the chilly bite had now become quite fierce indeed, with many of us having the use every piece of clothing we had to protect us from the piercing cold blowing directly at us off the sea. Being able to see our target from so far away also made the final few miles deceptive as the town never seems to get any closer when the visibility is so good like that. We did however eventually arrive in Birchington all quite exhilarated, not to say exhausted, well before dusk and a great sense of satisfaction it seemed all round. Mike

Sat 22 Jan WWW Wintry Winchester Linear Walk

19 miles. Ldr Jerome Ripp

Summary:

20 gathered at Winchester station, with the weather right on target for this advertised wintry walk; cold wind and the odd burst of sleet. Through the town and soon we were striding out on the south downs way and by the time we had reached Cheesefoot Head we had grown to 22 as Don and Jenny, having missed a train connection, had made a heroic effort going at challenge walk pace to catch us up. The briefest of stops and then a brisk pace to reach our lunch stop at Milbury's pub before noon, a record for this leader who is more well known for late lunches. The sign at the entrance proudly announced "barman of the year" but was rather a puzzle as the gruff monosyllabic publican did not seem to fit such a description. However the food was good and came quickly and we were all rounded up and out within 50 minutes. A longer afternoon on the Monarchs way with a superb view over Stephen's Castle Down and a break at Upham. We left the Monarch's way, bade farewell to Dave, our Wessex guest and strode out round Marwell's Zoo, nothing much to see despite the signs of exotic animals. Via Twyford to our finish at Shawford just in time for the train having covered 21 miles during the course of an

excellent walk. Jerome

Sat 15 Jan 2011 Winter walk from Staines to Putney

21 miles. Ldr Andy Shoesmith

Summary:

Despite problems with the trains, 23 people met at Staines station on a cloudy, but thankfully dry, morning. We set off along the Thames path, into the teeth of a strong, cold, breeze, which encouraged us to maintain a good pace. The path here is much quieter and we only saw a few joggers and dog-walkers. Just beyond Chertsey bridge we were stopped to allow Police to corral two horses, which had obviously been loose on the nearby road. Approaching Shepperton, we passed by the island where two men drowned on New Years Eve. In the daylight it seemed quite placid and it was hard to believe that a tragedy could occur at such a short crossing. During the morning the wind shifted to our backs, which was very welcome. On reaching Hampton Court a dozen of us lunched at the Prince of Wales pub. Others used the excellent cafés and delis. One person dropped out after lunch, so 22 walked along the edge of Bushey Park, over Kingston Bridge, then through the houses to the Kingston Gate of Richmond Park (and a welcome toilet stop). We continued round the Isabella Plantations, into the middle of the Park. At the Pen Ponds 6 people split off, to finish in Richmond. The remaining 16 walked to Robin Hood Gate and across the A3, into Wimbledon Common. Once again the party split, to minimise the impact of the train disruption. 7 headed to Wimbledon and the remaining 9 continued to Putney Heath and then down into Putney. Is that a record "wastage" rate? Overall a good day, with great walking weather. Andy

Sat 8 Jan 2011 London Parks

18 miles. Ldr Rob Myers

Summary:

Heavy overnight and early morning rain deterred some walkers, however, there was a good turnout of 23 that gathered at the start in Trafalgar Square. The weather was dry throughout the day with occasional sunny intervals which was really pleasant. The walk proceeded through St James Park, Green Park and into Hyde Park where Serpentine Running Club were holding their monthly handicap race consisting of two laps of the Serpentine. This kept us entertained and I think we avoided obstructing the runners. We took the opportunity to explore Kensington Gardens including some of Anish Kapoor's stainless steel structures in his "World turned upside down" exhibition. Shortly afterwards we explored Holland Park and enjoyed seeing the Kyoto Garden and several peacocks. A necessary stretch of road walking took us to the Thames at Hammersmith for lunch at the "Rutland Arms". We were served very quickly and the beer was good. The afternoon walk began with a walk along the Thames Path to Colney Reach and on to Chiswick House and Gardens. This was the former home of Lord Burlington who was obsessed with all things roman, so there were plenty of roman statues and even a small temple. There was also a couple of obelisks fashionable during Victorian time. A further stretch of the Thames Path followed past Kew Bridge to Brentford. Here I inadvertently did a stretch of the Thames Path which I hadn't recce'd. Fortunately I got away with it. From Brentford Lock a short walk along the Grand Union Canal took us to Boston Manor Park where we passed the Jacobean mansion currently closed to the public due to safety issues. Another road section took us to Gunnersbury Park which was our final destination. The former home of the Rothschild family which has been a public park since 1926, Gunnersbury Park contained many fine old trees as well as a lot of dilapidated

buildings some of which are used as museums. A fine walk enjoyed by all. Rob

Mon 3 Jan 2011 Peter Saw's Christmas walk

20 miles. Ldr Susanne Waldschmidt

Summary:

More mince pies courtesy of Hilary and Peter, who welcomed us at Norbiton Station. 14 walkers again accompanied by Father Christmas (we couldn't get rid of him) followed the Rivers Hogsmill, Wandle and Thames to Richmond via Morden Hall Park.

Lots of miles, 19.9 according to 1 GPS and 20.1 according to the other GPS, (Wise Father Christmas suggested the difference was due to the number of visits to the loo) and lots of laughs. Exactly what a social walk should be. We even had a couple of hours of sunshine.

Sun 2 Jan 2011 Clapham Junction to North Downs

17 miles. Ldr Susanne Waldschmidt

Summary:

12 walkers accompanied by Father Christmas walked due south through the green spaces of south London. Highlights included a prison, lots of dinosaurs and Susan's Christmas cake and mince pies. The walk finished with a tram ride to Croydon.

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