

## NEWSLETTER JANUARY – JUNE 2019

Another year nearly done and what a year it has been. A very hot summer with walks cancelled because of the heat and, paradoxically, I can't remember a year when so many walks that I intended to go on have been either cancelled because of torrential rain or I decided a nice dry house was preferable to getting a soaking. We are never happy.

Mary has produced an excellent report on the Sunday Walkers' activities that is well worth reading, so please find a few minutes to do so, it will be time well spent.

Any contributions to the Newsletter will be gratefully received as will comments (favourable only!) and suggestions (nice ones, please!) as to what you would like to read about. Remember this is your Newsletter. I hope you enjoy my paltry efforts!

### SUMMER SUPPER

After a number of highly successful visits to High Rocks for the Premier Event of the Summer Season, your Committee decided to try a different venue for 2018. Our esteemed Chairman spent many fruitless hours on the telephone to, and in visiting, the many hotels and restaurants in and around the fair town of Royal Tunbridge Wells trying to find a suitable establishment to feed the discerning crowd of gourmands that the members of Tunbridge Wells Rambling Club assuredly are. Diaries were consulted, menus poured over, fine wines and comestibles sampled until eventually the Royal Wells Hotel on Mount Ephraim was chosen as worthy to benefit from our patronage.

Having selected the Royal Wells the arduous work of actually picking which of the delectable courses should be chosen to tempt the fine palates of our members began. To spread the load of this gruelling task Janet invited your Committee to add their combine brain powers to come to a consensus as to what might be a fitting combination of vittles to be served to us. You will of course realise that trying to come to an agreement at any committee meeting, let alone that of TWRC, is "like herding cats" but after a thorough exchange of views a menu for our event was eventually settled on.



On the very fine evening of 18<sup>th</sup> August a jolly crowd of upstanding citizens were seen to be entering the Royal Wells Hotel. This crowd was faced with a sea of round tables spread with fine white linen napery covered by sparkling glassware and gleaming cutlery. After being seated we were descended on by a host of attendants who proceeded to serve a meal of food that was so delicious my taste buds were so overwhelmed that my memory of what I ate has been completely obliterated from my grey matter

(not difficult I hear you say!).

Once our appetites were sated, we had to suffer Len's brain teasing quiz, a quite daunting task after our exquisite meal. Now Len had promised that this quiz would be easier than the completely impossible one he had presented us with at the AGM. I won't say that Len was "economical with the truth" because that would be untrue but, suffice it to say, the difficulty was only marginally reduced. Yet again your hardworking editor failed to gain a prize – no hard feelings Len but please give me a fighting chance next time.

Many thanks to Janet for organising yet another successful event and to Len for the quiz but, most of all, to those attending and contributing so much to the pleasure of the evening.

*Editor*

## LONGER WEDNESDAY WALKERS

What a cracking summer! Long hot summer days, sometimes too hot but we shouldn't complain although it did mean we had to cancel a walk. We have had an influx of new members which is excellent news and now we regularly have numbers in the high teens and the other day we had 24!

Again this year we have had new walks. A linear walk from Newenden along the river and up through Chapel Down vineyards to Tenterden and the bus back. For the first time we did a walk around Bedgebury in May and saw an amazing profusion of rhododendrons and azaleas. This is certainly a walk we will repeat at the same time next year. We also walked from Fairlight on a lovely sunny day and had wonderful views along the coast from Dungeness to Eastbourne and the sea looked more like the Mediterranean than the English Channel.

In October we did a walk from Mayfield which was in memory of Jeremy. He lived here and loved walking in this locality and afterwards we meet up with Chris, his widow, and past walkers in the garden centre at Mark Cross. There must have been 30 or more people there! It was good to see so many old faces.

We also returned to Ashdown Forest. We haven't walked here since Yvonne and Alan stopped walking (they were the font of all knowledge regarding trails on the Forest) and it is something we all agreed we must do again.

I am pleased to report we have several new members and they have even led walks this summer so many thanks to Jane, Anne and Bob.

We are always pleased to see ex walkers join us for tea after the walks. It is always nice to see them again and not lose touch.

*Eric Botley*

## WEDNESDAY 5 MILE WALKERS

As I write I am in the middle of organising our Wednesday Five-Milers' Christmas Lunch (by the time you read this I am sure we will have all had a lovely time and raised lots of money in our annual raffle for The Hospice in the Weald) and it has brought home to me just how many people we have lost in the last year as numbers are well down. This has come about due to ill health and people moving away. Nevertheless, last week when walking on a glorious Autumn day we had a turn-out of twenty-two.



**Lunch near Otford**

The current programme has seen us charging about all over Kent and Sussex and enjoying some beautiful countryside but with very few walks being in what I would describe as The Tunbridge Wells Vicinity but in the next programme there will be some a little closer to home.

One of our most memorable walks was back in the summer on a glorious day when Jackie & Bob led from their home in Rotherfield. Not only did they take us on a lovely walk but we then went back to their place where Bob produced some of his delicious homemade lemonade and Jackie put on a magnificent spread of cakes. We sat out in the sunshine and admired their garden which had been open to the public the weekend before. An outstanding day and many thanks to Jackie & Bob.



**Tea with Jackie & Bob**

Our walks are generally about five miles at a leisurely pace, we picnic around midday and usually end up with tea afterwards, again with thanks to Jackie & Bob.

I would like to wish good health and recovery to all those in our group who are currently suffering illnesses.

*Janet Wilson*

## FRIDAY WALKERS

### “Ancient but Teeming with Life”

On a walk led by Janet in April in Staffhurst Wood near Edenbridge, we saw the following notice, with its wonderful headline. We felt it made the ideal motto for the Friday Group!



We've spent the rest of the year trying to live up to it, with varying degrees of success. The summer months were dominated by the ominously wonderful weather, leading to a high degree of schizophrenia about the weather which probably only the English can achieve: we don't want it to rain, we love a beautiful English summer, but we know it's not normal and know that we take having masses of water available for granted; at the same time we know we can't tolerate drought for long – we simply aren't organized for it.

We've had some wonderful walks in this half of the year, with the summer countryside looking spectacular, accompanied by the song of the skylark and the call of the buzzard. Our visit to Cousley Wood was made even more memorable by the fact that the pub, unexpectedly, served delicious Colombian food. To be recommended. Later, we hit something of a low point on our walk from Appledore, unusually battling into the teeming rain at the end of the walk, though we did see the River Authority workers busy with ingenious amphibious machines tackling a highly invasive plant that is threatening to choke the famous Military Canal. We also found 'The Black Lion' very welcoming. I'm glad to say that Eileen, who was unable to lead that walk, due a broken wrist, has been back in action for the last few weeks. We've also had more encouraging news of John, who is responding well to new treatment. However, John and Evelien remain very much in our thoughts.

After the long, hot summer, the autumnal change in the weather has come as something of an unpleasant taste of reality. Nonetheless, we have been compensated by brilliant displays of autumn leaves, notably the oaks which seem to have changed later and more slowly than usual; there were splendid examples on our recent walk in the Chiddingstone/Penshurst area. However, we haven't yet had any truly Somme-like mud with which to celebrate the centenary of the end of WWI.

It's been good to see a number of new faces joining us occasionally: Serene, Christina and Lynne D. It has also been nice to see Jenny H again quite regularly of late. The core of the membership come out pretty frequently, but we realize that some people actually have to, you know (just whisper it) – *work* -! and others' family circumstances, grandparent duties etc are such that they can't walk with us as frequently as they would like. Add to these factors, people's various holiday plans and, unsurprisingly numbers fluctuate from week to week, ranging at the top end from about 25+ occasionally to around 10-12 at the low end, though recently we haven't plumbed the depths of a turnout of 2 (Maurice and Carol, a couple of seasons ago, resulting from a combination of bad weather and an outlying start.)

*Nick Churchill*

## SUNDAY WALKERS ON THE OLD WAY (continued)

<http://britishpilgrimage.org/old-way/>

Continuing in May, the next 2 sections of the Old Way were possible using trains firstly from Chichester back to Havant, where we picked up the coastal path rounding the many inlets to the attractive village of Bosham. Here the tide was out and we were able to walk across the channel before turning inland to Chichester passing the Fishbourne Roman Villa on the way.

**Part 4** Being very warm in June, we enjoyed a very leisurely day, stopping for coffee, walking round the beautiful gardens and watching the peregrine falcon at Chichester Cathedral, and visiting all the churches in the pretty little villages. We walked through Tangmere Airfield Museum to Boxgrove Priory (picnic lunch) then a beer in a pub garden and on through Slindon to Arundel Cathedral.

**Part 5** from Arundel to Chanctonbury Ring was not possible by train, so it was back to using taxis again. Nor was it possible to carry enough liquid on a 17 mile walk in July's heat, so we were grateful to a plumber running a hosepipe from the main to refill our bottles! Those who did the Arundel coach trip last year will remember the stunning view of the castle from the banks of the River Arun. We visited 6 ancient churches on this stretch, South Stoke, North Stoke with its medieval wall paintings, Amberley, Storrington, Sullington, Washington and passed through some very attractive villages with thatched roofs plus the upmarket Amberley Castle.

**Part 6** began with an early start after the Club Summer Supper for another 17 mile section from Chanctonbury Ring to Ditchling. We decided to spoil ourselves with coffee and cakes in the delightful village of Steyning before introducing ourselves to the vicar as pilgrims in the historic St Cuthmans Church and were treated to a guided tour and some local history. Did you know that Steyning was once a port? We then visited Bramber Castle ruins and church, and Upper Beeding Priory before climbing up to follow the South Downs Way for our picnic lunch at Truleigh Hill Youth Hostel, a pub stop at Devil's Dyke and a drink stop at Pyecombe Church of the Transfiguration, which still welcomes pilgrims old and new!, before our descent to finish in Ditchling at 7pm-so much history and so much refreshment on the way-did those early pilgrims do as well! We also saw a murmuration of a flock of goldfinches, which I'm told is a charm, which we had never seen before.

**Part 7** Looking longingly up at the Downs, our route from Ditchling shadowed a Roman road and took us past the 11<sup>th</sup> century Streat Church, stopping at East Chiltington Church, then the ancient church of Hamsey situated on an island in the River Ouse, where new life was being celebrated with a christening. We followed the river into Lewes, climbed up to the Castle, then down to the remains of the Priory, where we were amused to find 59 cubicles so the monks did not have to queue for the toilet! It then came as a shock to climb steeply up to Lewes Golf Course and over the hill to Glynde.

**Part 8** Another glorious day over the downs with views on both sides to the sparkling sea on our right and the Weald stretching away on our left. We savoured each break beginning with the Ram Inn for coffee, then the 12<sup>th</sup> century Downland churches of Firle, Berwick, famous for its Bloomsbury group wall paintings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Alfriston, then the country's smallest church of Lullington, Wilmington church and ruined Priory to finish in Folkington.

**Part 9** coincided with Armistice Day, and we admired the poppy tree in Jevington Churchyard. We observed the 2 minute silence on a lonely downland hill sheltering from one of the hailstorms that hit us that day, but were fortunate to finish over the Pevensey levels in sunshine to Herstmonceux Church, also beautifully decorated with poppies.



Only 6 more sections to do before we reach Canterbury!

Apart from the Old Way the Sunday walkers finished one of their rambles, for the second year running, with a picnic on a very hot sunny day at Tonbridge Castle to listen to a concert given by the band, Second Wind, in which one of our group was playing.

*Mary Blinks*

## **FAMILY NEWS**

In memory of Sydney Monham

Many of us in the Rambling Club, especially those of us of more senior years who walk or walked on a Wednesday will remember Sydney well. Ill health and physical frailty in his late eighties prevented him continuing his walking but he was always interested in how the club was doing, and in particular learning news of all his friends.

When I first joined the club, (around 1989 was it?) Sydney organised the programme on a monthly basis, handing out paper lists as this was in the days before computers. He kept a diary of all our walks noting the leader, the numbers, the length and route, the weather and other comments if appropriate. I remember 2 or 3 walks with over 50!! A gentle man, he was always encouraging those of us who were a little diffident in leading, sometimes with a suggested route. He himself took us to places such as Slaugham, Shorne Country Park, various South Downs, Otford, Limpsfield and so on to widen our knowledge of walks away from our usual areas.



During walks it is easy to get to know folk and over the years one learnt about Sydney's family, how he lost his wife when his boys were around 9 and 12 years old, bringing them up to become a loving and well adjusted family. He was immensely proud of his grandsons, and whenever I am in Paddock Wood I recall tales of Sydney taking Paul to Barsleys to tea. Sydney lived out a strong Christian faith, giving much time to his church in many roles. He was also a keen photographer, one project taking him to photograph Wakehurst Place through every month of a year. Steam power was also an interest he had followed from his youth, together with motorbikes from the days when he himself rode one (with a famous name which I can't remember) He would describe trips often with Paul to the Annual Festival of Steam at Goodwood relating with great enthusiasm about such vehicles as steam rollers.

Sydney was a great companion and friend and many of us will have happy memories of time in his company.

*Yvonne Spencer*

## **In Memoriam**

It was with sadness that we learned that Ron Pither passed away in May. Ron was a very active member of the Club, leading rambles, many of which were on his beloved South Downs, as well as coach rambles, and taking part in Club holidays. He was our Club Chairman from 1991-2004 and became Treasurer, stepping into the breach when our previous Treasurer died suddenly after the AGM in 1996, and Ron continued to maintain our accounts until 2003. We send our condolences to his family, especially his wife, Pam, who was our Rambles Secretary from 1990-2001.

*Mary Blinks*

## **EDITOR'S FOOTNOTES**

### **Committee**

We have unfortunately lost the services of Eric Botley on the Committee. He had not been on the Committee for very long but in that time he very successfully arranged for the trip to Oxford this year and before his departure had booked the coach for 2019's trip to Cambridge.

Thanks Eric for your service to TWRC.

## **Coach Trip**

As a change the Committee has decided not to hold a summer Supper in 2019 but to move the Coach Trip to August 3<sup>rd</sup>. As mentioned above we will be going to Cambridge. Booking forms will be sent out with the AGM papers.

It is intended that a walking tour be organised like the one we had in Oxford. Further details in due course with the booking form.

I will be organising the trip from now on.

## **Footpath Fund**

As many of you will be aware we have a "Footpath Fund" which has remained with a balance of £588.50 since time immemorial.

This fund was specifically set up to fund any improvements to a footpath such as the provision of a gate where one would be of benefit. From time to time ideas as to how the money could be spent are requested and I am asking again if anybody has any suggestions.

If you do have any ideas please, please let any Committee member know.

As a start to making use of the funds the Committee has decided to buy several pairs of secateurs to be available for walk leaders to carry so they can give a snip when required.

*Editor*

**On behalf of the Committee may I take this opportunity of wishing all members and their families a Merry Christmas and a very Healthy and Happy New Year.**



**Here is hoping for good weather in 2019. Not too hot, not too cold. Not too dry, not too wet.  
Good walking.**