

## GROUP REPORTS

### THREE MILE WALKS

The three-mile walks have a small following and I feel there is sufficient interest to keep the group going. About 13 walk occasionally depending upon the day of the week and, on average, we have about half a dozen or so on each walk. No doubt as we all get older and less agile the group will grow.

Due to back problems, I didn't do much walking in the third quarter programme so am unable to report but am up and running again now, says she with fingers crossed.

We started the last quarter of the year with a walk from Fordcombe which was absolutely beautiful until we went downhill to a stream which we needed to cross. There appeared to be two choices – go for the high bit, run like hell and take a leap of faith or go down to water level and carefully balance on some tree roots and suchlike. Someone, who shall be nameless, decided to circle around this difficult bit but unfortunately didn't realise that where she was walking was a deep bog until it was too late. She continued to sink deeper and deeper, and I thought we might need to call the fire brigade to get her out but fortunately with the help of some, mainly Mary's husband Anthony, we got her out. She had sunk almost to her waist. Let this be a lesson to us all about the importance of pre-walking as near the date of the lead as possible, and also that walking poles can be very useful to gauge the depth of mud and water.

Our next walk was from Perry Hill led by Sue Hammond. It had only a small following and those who didn't come missed a delightful walk on a beautiful day with coffee outside the café in the sunshine afterwards.

Christine then led from Penshurst where half a dozen had a very enjoyable walk I am told.

Next came my lead from Groombridge, again with half a dozen of us, and it took nearly as long as the longer walks, as it was very muddy in places and we had to go really carefully. The timing was not helped by a very difficult stile (which I reported over a year ago and it has only got worse) and the fact that I missed a turning and we had to back track for a short way. Anyhow, we saw that big yellow thing in the sky for the first time for a couple of weeks and some delightful views.

As I type, we are looking forward to Sevenoaks, Haysden and Chiddingstone to finish off the current programme.

*Janet Wilson*

### WEDNESDAY 5 MILE WALKS

It's been another varied programme of walks, which Janet has put together for us – some new routes and some old favourites. Numbers have fluctuated between four and twenty-one. Considering how dreadful some of the weather has been lately we've been very fortunate not to be rained off. Here are a few highlights: -

In June Janet led from Hartfield and found us a great lunch stop at the St. Ives campsite, with picnic benches and toilets – what a luxury! Maurice took us on a lovely walk from Ightham village, through the Warren and some orchards, where there were already some small apples to tempt us. On our return we made a detour down Busty Lane and speculated as to how it got its name (“answers on a postcard please”). A road closure at Chiddingstone Hoath caused a lot of us problems getting to Chiddingstone for Gill's walk, and parking proved difficult because of an event at the school – but the walk was great when we finally got going.

July started with Julie's walk from Boar's Head, following the Jarvis Brook and ending up passing Bowles Outdoor Pursuits Centre. Lisa's walk from Penshurst Station encountered a rather large bull, prompting a detour on the way to Becket's Farm, with its free-range chicken, geese and guinea fowl. Bob's walk on Ashdown Forest started from Fairwarp Church, where we had not expected to find parking charges – this led to the question “How many pensioners does it take to work out how to pay for parking on a mobile phone?” At Leigh, for June's walk, we encountered a number of vintage cars going to a rally at Penshurst Place. At the end of the month Bob led us on a walk from Sandhurst, on a warm day with little shade, passing vineyards and hop gardens.

In August Peter took us on walk from Collier Street, through recently harvested fields, one of which appeared to be infested by lizards. Adaire and Sue led us on a figure of eight from Burswood. We waved to the kids on the Spa Valley Railway as the train went by and had another civilized lunch stop with tables and benches at Coblands. Some of us caught a brief glimpse of a kingfisher on the pond. Christine and Jan took us on a circuit from Carpenter's Lane near Hadlow on a hot day, when passing the Kentish Rifleman was rather tantalising. We paused to watch a family of four buzzards circling above woodland and making a lot of noise. We finished the month with our summer supper at The Barn – a very enjoyable occasion.

September started with twenty-one of us walking at Wadhurst, led by Jenny. We skirted Bewl Water for some distance, with plenty of geese and ducks to look at during the lunch stop. Christine led again from Underriver, following a section of the Greensand Way with great views. The lunch time entertainment consisted of five large spotted pigs, who seemed most interested in us – fortunately they were behind a fence. Gill and Bob took us on a walk from Dene Park, with another distant view of the Kentish Rifleman and lunch on Shipbourne Common. I led my favourite circuit of the Medway from Teston Country Park (you can still pay for parking with cash!), where we glimpsed another kingfisher. At Wateringbury we saw the usual flock of swans – and the single white goose who is always with them and presumably identifies as a swan!

In October Christine led again – she deserves a medal! We started from the North Pole (the one at Wateringbury), skirted Kings Hill golf course and passed through Pizien Well, where the lane has been beautified with flowering plants. I then missed June's walk at Hadlow and Julie's at Paddock Wood because of holiday and covid. June led again from Mereworth, where we passed through strawberry fields with tempting almost-ripe fruit.

November saw the start of some serious mud! Gill took us on a circuit from Southborough Common, where wellies were definitely useful. When Christine led a walk from Brenchley on a misty day, we saw a lot of geese on Furnace Pond and a couple of emus at Swigs Hole Farm.

There are still a few more weeks of walking – and then the Christmas lunch at the High Rocks, which is always a great occasion to look forward to. Is Janet thinking up another fiendish quiz to distract us between courses?

*Sue Brown*

## **LONGER WEDNESDAY WALKS**

A first for this year was to be shot at while having lunch on a Forest Row walk. We were peacefully having lunch on picnic tables in a car park when lead shot rained down through the trees! There was a shoot taking place in the nearby fields, but we didn't think it would include us!

In the summer we like to walk on the coast and we have done several South Downs walks this year starting from Winchelsea and Litlington/Alfriston. This year has been a good year for new walks which have included Chart Sutton to Boughton Monchelsea, Goudhurst and Etchingham.

As in the past we try to start and end from garden centres with cafes for coffee beforehand and tea and cakes afterwards and this year we have used Coolings in Knockholt, Taywell Farm shop in Goudhurst, King Johns Nursery in Etchingham, Tablehurst Farm in Forest Row and Pleasant View in Chart Sutton. Many of these

establishments are struggling to survive (made worse by the Budget) so it helps them financially and provides a sociable meeting place for us and a place to park (not easy these days).

I have included some photos taken on our walks. As a quiz can you identify where they are? The answers to all but the most obvious are in the article.

*Eric*

*Please see later in the Newsletter for the answers.*







## FRIDAY WALKS

June was kicked off with a walk from Sarah and Nick starting from Burwash Common, a gorgeous sunny day, perfect for walking. Memorable for some fabulous views (e.g. across the River Dudwell valley to see Brightling Observatory on top of a hillside, two sets of rampaging cattle (which showed no initial interest and then thundered across the fields to join us) and... the muddiest, wettest stretch so far in 2024! The pub was being refurbished so we had our dinner at the Old Orchard Nursery on the Heathfield Road. A smashing place – we were very well looked after.

Next up was Jenny M from Bodiam Castle. Quite a blustery, coldish start but the forecasted rain shower didn't materialise. Lovely walk, initially alongside the river, and with some beautiful views. We saw alpacas at a place called Udiam which had wonderful, landscaped gardens and a very posh diverted path for us walkers! A fantastic pub at the end – the Castle Inn opposite the NT car park.

I missed Diana and Nick's Marsh Green walk, so the next one was Brenda's all day walk from Huckling. Lots to see as evidenced by the accompanying pictures – the white flowers of the dogwood tree, the walking group (taken by Sheila) and a lovely wildflower meadow. A nice day, without being too hot. Ian B heard a yellowhammer. Great outward half through Woodland Trust land and Gorham Woods with two pairs of secateurs on the go to cope with stray brambles and vegetation! The midday visit to the pub was followed by the second half of the walk. The afternoon was on very different terrain, visiting the wooden sculptures – the Axe, the Pigs (wild boar and piglets), the Shepherd (picture taken with the walkers) and the Wildlife Log (now much decayed, due to the action of the wildlife!).





The next scheduled walk (Sheila from Mark Cross) was a horrible day with lots of rain and was abandoned because nobody turned up! So, our next excursion was from Ian B from Tudeley. A nice day for walking – early little bit of drizzle but then OK. Skylarks singing and a hovering kestrel en route. We started at the pub (George and Dragon) and then went on via Capel Church. The break was at the East Lock on the Medway approaching from the South – I've not done that bit before. Tonbridge Traditional on draught at the George and Dragon.

Next was John and Evelien from the Tickled Trout at West Farleigh. It was a sweltering hot day – full sun and 30 degrees plus! Memorable because of the issues getting to the pub – the top road after crossing Teston Bridge was closed (resurfacing) – just for that one day! – so we started from Teston Country Park and did a slightly shorter walk. This was followed by Evelien and John again (!) the following week, this time from High Rocks – it was due to be Fir Tree Road, but the dreaded road works struck again. Another good walk, with a muddy stretch at the start and finish. High Rocks to Groombridge and back – banana break in the playground at Groombridge. A nice, dry day! Alpacas enroute. Afterwards we ate in the big dining room on the first floor at High Rocks. Very posh! Finally, Tonbridge Rustic to drink, in smashing condition!

Next was Susan from Camer Country Park - a 6 miler round the mega vineyard via Luddesdown. Recent additions in the vineyards include the wildlife towers on the Silverhand estate. Different boxes for barn owls, little owls, kestrel and bats – also habitat for a number of different insects. Back to the Cricketers at Meopham for lunch. This was followed by Sheila from Rushlake Green. A lovely walk by all accounts - and people turned up this time!



Nick and Diana were next from Broadwater Warren. Diana showed us the resident Konik ponies (pictured) in the reserve – she knows all their names!

This was followed by Ian B from the Spotted Dog at Penshurst - another lovely day (again missed by your correspondent). Boo! Next was Belinda and Richard from The Huntsman near Eridge station. A genuine 6 miler. Nice day for walking, along a chunk of the Sussex Border Path through to Groombridge (Corseley Road car park and up the hill). We saw a Spa Valley steam train en route (see picture) Belinda reckoned she organised this – I don't believe her for a minute! The Huntsman pub was great – absolutely top-notch Long Man best bitter.



Our next walk was Nigel and Claudette from Horsmonden with lunch at the Halfway House at Brenchley. Absolute miserable weather forecast – a rain warning for Thursday and Friday – but we did very well with only a spattering of rain over the last few hundred yards of the walk. Some minor disgruntling from the female ranks about the stile count – Nigel underestimated by 2 or 3, but well within the statistical error for stile estimations! Wet, not too slippery underfoot, but the stiles and bridges were a bit dodgy.

Brenda's walk was from Ightham Mote – I was away again! Double boo!! Janet led next from The Swan at Dallington near Brightling (near Rotherfield). Horrible rain on the way to the start of the walk – but it stopped for us to walk! It was the mad Jack Fuller follies walk – lots to see and some fantastic views. This was followed by MD from Linton (churchyard car park) – with lunch at the Bull. A horrible day – rained steadily for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way round and then slacked off for the return leg on the Greensand Way. Near 6 miler. Great pint – Shepherd & Neame Late Red and the mushrooms on sourdough toast were very good.

Sheila led next from Mark Cross. Really demanding terrain, up and down, wet underfoot, but a smashing walk. Good views especially of Crowborough on the hill so far round (see picture).



John and lovely walk with great views of Bayham Abbey on the last stretch (see picture). The Elephant's Head pub very good – note a full range of Evelien were next from the Elephant's Head at Hook Green. Another Harvey's beers – six different brews on draught including Harvey's Old Ale.

Next up was Eileen from Leigh. It was very wet underfoot and a bit murky – we could not see Penshurst Place from our usual vantage point on the concrete road above the valley. We went to the Fleur de Lis afterwards for the first time in ages! This was followed by Nick and Diana from Rotherfield. This walk was quite extreme! It was wet, muddy, and hard going – it had a bridge under water, very soggy fields, roughish terrain and was up and down a lot! Note that everybody on the walk – without exception - wore wellies! Good pub – the Kings Arms at Rotherfield - and it was notable for the liver/bacon.



Next up was Susan from Cranbrook. The terrain had dried up considerably on the actual walk (see the picture of us walking near the end of the walk) following a very wet walkout. Notable because of the need to reroute following the discovery of a blocked footpath (with no alternative directions!) but it did mean we could walk a section through Cranbrook, a lovely old town. The George in Cranbrook is a great pub, fantastic chips in a basket and great monster sandwiches (with S&N 1698 real ale chutney!)

We finished this session with a Celestine double header. Firstly, from Frant with lunch at the Abergavenny Arms. Only one person serving drinks and food and also clearing tables! She was run off her feet! Nice walk, nearly 6 miles in total. Undulating and quite wet in the Pond Bays Section – the clue is in the name! Pretty decent day weatherwise. The second weeks offering was from The Crown in Groombridge (Nigel's walk but Celestine led it). Another good one, walking across the road from the pub to Groombridge Place, some lovely views and then back through Burswood on another nice day. Great turnout for lunch (15) with 20 for the walk. Autumn has really kicked in now with lovely colours on the trees and on the ground (see pictures) and your correspondent has enjoyed recent walks (kicking the dry leaves) very much.





## THE WEBSITE

At last some progress is being made on the new website. Nick, like me, thought he would have a go but soon realised that he was not a website designer. Nick did, however, know a man with experience who has made websites for other clubs, so we hope, that in the not too distance future, we will have a website fit for purpose.

## Photo Quiz Answers

Wooden knight Winchelsea  
Giant tortoise Hastings  
Group photo at pond Goudhurst  
White stone carving Etchingham  
Hanging man and woman Etchingham  
Buttercups goat sanctuary Boughton  
Monchelsea  
Deer and peacock Boughton Monchelsea  
Wooden horses in hedge Alfriston  
Bowl Water  
Ruins of Brambletye Manor built in 1631  
Group with haybale Broad Oak

## FOOTNOTES

Brenda has reminded me of the service given by Berghaus for a free repair of their gear see: -

<https://www.berghaus.com/repairs.list>

Having used the service, I can thoroughly recommend it.

I do hope that you enjoy the newsletter. If anybody has any suggestions as to content, please let me know. Or even supply an article – all are welcome!



*Merry Christmas and a  
Happy New Year to all our  
Members their Families and*

