

NEWSLETTER

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The first half of the year saw a well-attended AGM and Social Evening where we scratched our heads over some of Len's excellent quiz questions. It was held, this year, at St John's Church Hall in Tunbridge Wells which turned out to be a better venue than last year and there is adequate free parking in the vicinity so we will try to arrange to have the same venue next year. Sheila Jones should be applauded for her catering which was enjoyed by all with plenty of French bread, cheeses and pate etc. to say nothing of plenty of wine and other drinks of the alcoholic variety and otherwise. Many thanks, Sheila.

(Editor's note: Janet has forgotten to mention the extremely efficient way in which the AGM formal business was conducted – it must have lasted all of 15 minutes.)



We also enjoyed our annual coach outing which this year was to Arundel made up mainly of both Wednesday Groups and some of the Sunday Walkers. I led 18 people in with a 5.5 mile walk from Patching where, fortunately the coach was able to turn around without too much trouble, something that had been giving me sleepless nights. The weather, whilst hardly glorious, was kind to us and stayed dry

although we fought our way westwards into a chilly wind. Others stayed on the coach until Arundel and either visited the Castle or the Wetlands Centre or went on various walks of their own.



On Sunday 30th July, almost a year following her passing away, there will be a Memorial Walk for Jill Rouse who was such a well-loved member of the club and active Committee Member. This will be from Scotney Castle where Jill gave much of her time in a voluntary capacity. I hope many of you will join us for that in Jill's memory. There will be the choice of a 5 mile walk starting at midday, a 12/13 mile walk starting at 09.30 or you are welcome to simply join us at the end, around 15.00, where we will be able to buy refreshments and have them in the Conference Room if it is wet.

Our next major event will be the Summer Supper to be held at High Rocks on 5th August. The form is attached to this Newsletter and I hope you will all be able to come. The event went well last year and we almost ran out of space so get your forms back to me as soon as you conveniently can. There will be another of Len's famous quizzes which have become so popular to enjoy.

Janet Wilson - Chairman

LONGER WEDNESDAY WALKERS

The walking this winter has been much better than last - not nearly so much mud and rain. This meant the bluebells appeared earlier than usual and we have seen some spectacular displays particularly on a Rusthall walk which we must put in the diary to do again this time next year as it was so good.

We have done some completely new walks from Ashurst, Shoreham and Tenterden. On the Shoreham walk although it was very 'undulating' we were rewarded with beautiful views over the North Downs. At the end of May we have a new walk planned from Wittersham on the Isle of Oxney. In June we have again booked out boat trip from Newenden to Bodiam and walking back to finish with a scrumptious cream tea in the new tea rooms at the Newenden Boat Station. This has again proved very popular allowing both longer walks back to Newenden and short walks around Bodiam and the boat back.

Usually we arrange to end up in a tea room which gives us the opportunity to meet up with some of those who have not been able to walk with us lately such as Colin, Betty and Geoff. It is always nice to see old faces.

Eric Botley

WEDNESDAY 5 MILE WALKERS

Our Five Mile Wednesday Walks have been interesting and varied and we have enjoyed some excellent walking weather. The bluebells have been magnificent this year and we have seen some lovely cowslips. It is normal for us to picnic half way around but occasionally as a treat we have a pub lunch

We are looking forward to our bi-annual July trip down to the seaside for a walk along the beach and back inland to finish up at Sheila & Ron's caravan where they usually do us proud on the refreshment front. We are keeping our fingers crossed for good weather which has not always been the case previously.

We are sorry that some of our walkers are suffering from various ailments and wish them well and hope they will be walking with us again before too long. We have welcomed a few new people to our group and another beautifully behaved dog. Our numbers vary but on one recent occasion we had 32 walkers which is quite like the good 'ole days.

Janet Wilson

FRIDAY WALKERS

The New Year got off to a rather disappointing start, with the second walk of the year, Celestine's, scheduled to depart from the Pantiles, being cancelled. This is almost unprecedented for the Friday Group; indeed I can't recall another cancellation in the six years I've been walking with the group, but our decision seemed to meet with general approval, based as it was on the very real hazard presented by the hard packed ice lying on the pavements and parking areas. Since then the weather has generally been very kind to us, if not to the farmers and gardeners, being dry and mild, with little mud by Kentish standards.

Probably the highlight of the first half of the year was Maggie's extra walk, which she led on Good Friday on her home 'patch' from East Dean. Maggie was unjustifiably nervous about leading it, wondering whether some of the group would struggle on the switchback of the Seven Sisters. In fact, a sterling performance was put in by everyone who turned out, walking in near perfect conditions; dry under foot, mild and sunny with a pleasant breeze and skylarks singing overhead, demonstrating that the members both know the local walking conditions well and can judge their own capabilities. The highlight of the day, however, awaited us back at East Dean, where, despite eye-wateringly expensive beer, we enjoyed watching the local Morris Dancers perform while we ate our lunches and quaffed our ale. (Incidentally 'Morris' is apparently a corruption of 'Moorish' i.e. Arabian/Islamic, from early medieval times.)

Our numbers seem to be holding up well, though some of our newer members haven't been able to turn out as often as they had hoped. However, Lynne and Kim have signed up recently and so far we have failed to put them off! Sarah W has been signing up to lead walks, which is a sure indication that she is on the mend, but I'm glad to see that she has organised understudies to support her if progress isn't quite as fast as she hopes. However, Sarah is definitely displaying commendable fighting spirit and we hope she is rewarded with a speedy recovery.

In many ways, now is some of the best walking of the year, with good conditions underfoot, a lot of plants and trees in flower or still fresh and green and a lot of activity on the part of wildlife. Today, I saw (and heard) at least five pairs of skylarks while walking back from work across local fields and was charmed to see a great tit emerge from a nest in a split in a gate post on my route. In recent weeks, I've noticed a lot of mistle thrushes about. I wonder if they are benefiting from the surplus of snails and slugs left by a mild winter? Apparently they can be quite predatory, killing and eating young birds of other species. On our Friday walks for the next few months we should be hearing blackcap and whitethroat in the hedgerows and quite a few other common woodland birds, notably song thrush, blackbird, robin and dunnock. And there is always that test for your hearing – can you hear the goldcrest?



Nick Churchill

ALL DAY SUNDAY WALKERS

NORTH DOWNS WAY 2017



When we set off on our walks each week we never know what adventures and excitements we are going to experience and this was certainly the case when eight of us Sunday walkers set off to begin the North Downs Way on a misty January day. Firstly was a ride from the end of the first leg in Guildford to the start in Farnham, in a chauffeur driven Mercedes, then being caught up in a manhunt. With a helicopter

circling overhead, we were chased by police warning us of a wanted man in a grey hoodie, who we should not approach, but ring 999-not a time to have a comfort stop! It was a relief when we saw a flashing police car pass by and it all went quiet after about half an hour. But there was more interest to come when we stopped for tea at Watts Gallery with time to visit the fascinating Chapel.



Blessed with a mild February day we began the next leg with another ride in the chauffeur driven Mercedes to the start in Guildford, having already enjoyed the first of the day's many coffee stops en route. A steady climb up to St Martha's Church, a historic church on the Pilgrims' Way, with views over eight counties, gave us a taste of pleasures to come. Our next point of interest was to count the pillboxes, part of the defences of WW2, before walking through the extensive Denbies Vineyards, and down to the stepping stones over the R. Mole before the steep climb up to the finish at Box Hill.



In March we continued to see more of the WW2 defences, as well as the chalk quarries and lime kilns of our industrial past. As we came within sight of the London skyline, we also began to shadow the M25 with its constant traffic noise drowning the birdsong, but we enjoyed the violets and wood anemones. On a record breaking 25°C April Sunday we continued to enjoy the wonderful spring blossom and appreciate the scenery whilst looking down on the traffic crawling along the M25. We have now reached Westerham and the deadline - to be continued in the next edition!

Mary Blinks

FAMILY NEWS

Terry Hendley

It is with great sadness we have to announce the death of Terry Hendley. He had been a stalwart supporter of the Wednesday Walkers group for many years regularly leading walks with his great friend Nesta around Speldhurst and Bewl Water. He had fought cancer for a long time and finally succumbed to it just a few days ago. During all the time I knew him he was unfailingly cheerful and a great companion – we could often be found at the back of the group walking and chatting together.

Our thoughts at this time go out to his family and especially to Nesta.

No details of the funeral are known at the time of writing but will be circulated when available.

He will be sorely missed.



Editor

USE THEM OR LOSE THEM

Many of you will be aware of The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the Deregulation Bill that has set a date of 2026 as the cut off point for adding historical footpaths to the definitive map. If you do know of any footpaths that are not on the map then it is important that they are reported so that moves can be made to ensure that the path is kept open for posterity.

The Ramblers have been heavily involved in the consultations and are on the Stakeholder Working Group and I suggest that you contact them.

Further information can be seen here:-

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-with-us/dont-lose-your-way/historic-paths-and-definitive-maps-timeline.aspx#deregulationbill>

Editor

EDITOR'S FOOTNOTE (Quite Literally!!!)

Thanks to everybody for the pictures. I hope that you like seeing them in the Newsletter – I think that they add a touch of personal interest. Keep them coming – I don't promise to publish them but if I don't get any you won't have the pleasure of

Here is my favourite picture of the recent ones I have seen. I just don't know how Jennifer does it. Whilst I have mud up to my knees her boots remain immaculate! I have failed to persuade her to write an article for the newsletter telling us her secret – I haven't given up hope though.

If any of you have ideas as to what you would like to see in your Newsletter please let me know. Any contributions would be much appreciated.



Editor