

NEWSLETTER July - December 2019

The last 6 months seems to have flown by and it is that time of year again when I have to put on my editor's cap and try to find something new for you to enjoy. This time we have a welcome new contributor to the walk reports – thanks Maurice – and we have another excellent contribution from Mary. Unfortunately some of the pictures in the Newsletter may not adequately survive reproduction. If anybody would like a copy of the original please contact me.

Our weather continues in its usual unfathomable way with some blazing hot days a couple of months ago and then reverting to clouds and rain just as Pat and I set off for a few days away in Snowdonia and Shropshire. When asked by a barman, at our walking lunch stop just outside Betws-y-Coed, how I was I responded with the typical understatement of an Englishman- “Damp” – we were of course soaking wet. Bridgnorth was freezing and the campsite electrics could not cope with everybody using their electric heaters so the site's main trip switch kept doing its job and, surprise surprise, tripping. Mind you it was no better when we got home and the central heating had to be revived from its slumber.

AGM

We returned to King Charles the Martyr Church hall for our AGM. Attendance was slightly down on last year but a goodly number of TWRC members were present to partake of the excellent buffet provided by Sheila – thanks Sheila. I don't know what Len was up to with the Quiz but our table managed to get one or two right answers to the questions this time. Len has obviously been taking note of my pleas.

Before we got down to the real business of the evening there was a slight delay as Janet had things to say. Fortunately this did not take too long before the hungry and thirsty mob was free to descend on the laden tables.

Editor

LONGER WEDNESDAY WALKERS

This winter has been particularly mild which meant we have only had to cancel two walks this year and leaders have come forward with interesting new walks from Matfield, Bough Beech, Eridge Park and Seddlescombe which has encouraged us to get out.

Our walk through Eridge Park meant that our leaders, Bob and Joy, had to get special permission to allow us to walk through. We also had a lovely walk through Bedgebury and The Pinetum and saw magnificent displays of rhododendrons and azaleas. We have planned new walks over Ashdown Forest, Appledore and Pett on the South Downs.

We will be doing again our very popular walk from Lullingstone Country Park in July to see the lavender fiels.

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 Sheila, Judy and Blanche. It is always nice to see old faces.

Eric Botley

WEDNESDAY 5 MILE WALKERS

Our Wednesday Group continues in much the same way as ever – 5 miles at a slow pace with a picnic en-route and just occasionally the treat of a pub lunch which, this programme, was at The Henry 8th Pub at Hever after a very nice walk from Bob & Gill. Gill & Bob also organise our New Year Walk which has become a favourite with nibbles and booze to follow, and, as ever, was enjoyed by all.



Another highlight of our year is Jackie & Bob's annual bluebell walk and it never ceases to amaze



me how truly beautiful they are so thank you, as always, Jackie & Bob.

We have walked from Ide Hill, Bough Beech and Marsh Green to the north, East Malling, Yalding and Teston Country Park to the east, west to Hever and Hartfield and several places southwards the remainder being near to home and all have been most enjoyable so a big Thank You to all our leaders.



Another place where we regularly walk, usually led by Adaire & Sue, is around Groombridge including the Burrswood Estate and we are rather concerned about the fate of Burrswood and the availability of the paths we have regularly trod which are not necessarily recognised footpaths. What with this and the problems over the bridge over the river at Groombridge Place it remains to be seen where we will be able to walk in the future – fingers crossed.

As we go forth into the summer we are looking forward to a varied programme which includes a linear walk with a steam train ride on the Bluebell Railway.

Janet Wilson

FRIDAY WALKERS

The Friday walks started off this session with a cracker – gorgeous weather and great views starting from Goudhurst and led by Steve Strutt – finished with a pint at the Halfway House – what’s not to like? The following week was a new one for me – Nick and Diana from Holtye – we had a great close up view of a bunch of (roe?) deer which ran across the field. Next was a peacock in another field, together with a bit of pheasant shooting, scaring the peacock which scuttled for cover. Another good walk for animals was Susan’s Robertsbridge trek – up the old drover’s road to a farm with a pack of Pyrenean Mountain dogs, together with views of deer and later three very friendly donkeys – Jenny M was in her element!

As ever, the weather in Q1 is always a bit dicey, and Brenda’s walk from Ryarsh fell victim to the elements (but this walk will figure in Q3). However, we did manage a walk from Shipbourne with a small group on that day. In contrast, Janet’s walk from Brightling (another new venue) was a stunner by all accounts, with plenty of photos to show it off. Lots of interesting architecture including a round tower and a mausoleum which looked like an Egyptian pyramid.

The first lot of flowers on show were the snowdrops at Chevening (Mary’s walk). Absolutely fabulous and lots of them. Good finish at the Bricklayer’s Arms on the Chevening Road – we were shoehorned into a table but the service and food were very good.



great beer and the sharing fish platter is highly recommended.



The prospect of Easter saw the usual South Coast offering, starting at Seaford Head. Sylvi, Diana and MD walked this out in March and nearly got blown off the cliff top. Another highlight on the day was a bit of sheep herding by the trio – a lamb had escaped from the field and had to be shepherded back to its mum.

As the weeks went by, the wood anemones kicked in (Eileen’s walk from Linton where we also encountered a few nice alpacas) and then the bluebells – later than usual, but exceptional this year in terms of density - particularly good for the blue stuff was the walk from Speldhurst. We finished at another pub becoming a favourite with your correspondent – the Crown at Groombridge –

We welcomed a number of new people such as Ian, Mary and Alison on the Friday walks this last session – always good to see. Our numbers are always pretty good on Friday walks, particularly for the more local starts. However, even when we go further afield, the attendance is usually in double figures.

Maurice Dickens

LONGER WALKERS

OLD WAY A pilgrimage from Southampton to Canterbury (continued)

Part 10 A drizzly 2nd December found us battling through mud and flood from Herstmonceux Church into Battle. After visiting 13th century Wartling Church, we returned to the 1066 Country Walk and indulged ourselves with brunch at Scolfes in Boreham Street, an old Wealden Hall House dating back to 1392. Beneath what is now the Tea Rooms area is a Norman style vault that holds the bricked up entrance to a tunnel, rumoured to lead to Herstmonceux Castle. Arriving at Penhurst Church, as the vicar was just about to lock up after morning service, he offered us a guided tour including of the churchyard where Harry Corbett of Steptoe fame is buried. We then sat in the porch framed by 600year old carved oak beams for our picnic lunch. Battle, decorated with Christmas lights was a welcome sight to finish the day.



Part 11 On a gloriously sunny January Sunday we pilgrims fortified ourselves with coffee in Battle to continue on an undulating section of the 1066 Country Walk. Starting through woodlands the walk opened out rewarding us with stunning views of the Sussex countryside to finish in Icklesham. We visited the 12th century churches of Westfield and Icklesham

Part 12 Our Pilgrimage was blessed with another glorious sunny day 15°C in February when we continued on the 1066 Country walk to Winchelsea to visit our first church of the day. When the seaport of Old Winchelsea was washed away and the new town built on a hilltop, building of the church began in 1288, but was partly destroyed by the French during the 100 years war, and fell into disrepair, so that when John Wesley preached there in the 18thC it was in ruins. After restoration it now contains some beautiful stained glass windows. We had to see Spike Milligan's grave in the churchyard and patronise the Winchelsea Farm Kitchen for coffee and sausage rolls recommended by our taxi driver! We then picked up Saxon Shore Way, passing Camber Castle, to Rye and its 12thC church, which was also damaged by the French, who made off with the bells, but they were recovered the following year when we raided the French. We then continued on the Sussex Border Path following the R. Rother and the Royal Military Canal, fringed with reeds, and with the tide out we enjoyed the water birds skimming over the water. Then it was a short climb uphill to the Isle of Oxney and its 15thC church in Stone-in-Oxney which contains a Roman altar and a map showing Romney Marsh and the dates of the change of course of the R. Rother and of the drainage channels.



Part 13 The sun continued to shine on our pilgrims as we continued on the Saxon Shore Way into Appledore for coffee. Then along the Royal Military Canal before rejoining the Saxon Shore way at beautiful Kenardington Church, which had also been attacked by the French, but then struck by lightning. Still on Saxon Shore Way to 11thC Warehorne

Church with its box pews, through Hamstreet Woods carpeted in wood anenomes, then passing St Augustine's Priory founded in 1254. Now a wedding venue, this distinguished medieval Priory is steeped in history. Originally home to the Black Cannons of St. Augustine's Order, it was a hostel for many pilgrims to Canterbury, later a centre for smugglers, most notably the Aldington Gang. Even to this day, it still retains an ancient offer of hospitality to the Archdeacon of Canterbury who has the privilege of staying at the Priory 'two nights and a day, but nothing more'. We finished this perfect day at Aldington Church.

Part 14 It was exactly one year after starting our pilgrimage in Southampton! A day of mixed weather starting with a short sleet shower, then sunny periods with a cold wind keeping the temperature down Whilst waiting for our taxi at Elham we saw the Palm Sunday procession, led by two donkeys, parade from the church round the market square. After the taxi ride back to Aldington, we visited the 11th century church, before continuing along the Saxon Shore Way down to the Royal Military Canal, then up between the enclosures of the Port Lympne Wild Animal Park, where we saw many wild animals (including water buffalo and giraffes). We had great views over Romney Marsh to the Dungeness Power Station, and just below us on the steep escarpment were the remains of Stutfall Castle, a Roman Shoreline Fort from the 3rd century, before refreshing ourselves in Port Lympne Castle Hotel. More of the Saxon Shore Way took us up to the big Etchinghill mast where we joined the Elham Valley Way to the 12th century Elham Church and pub!



Part 15 and our final day! And perfect walking weather to walk through the beautiful rolling countryside of the Elham Valley and visit 5 of their historic churches –how many had we visited since we left Southampton last year, not to mention hostelryes?-before the welcome sight of Canterbury Cathedral came into view. After a group photograph session we found somewhere to celebrate and express our heartfelt thanks to Dermot for planning it all and to Janet for helping with walking it all out-as she says, they have both walked all of the 217 miles twice!

The Old Way to Canterbury is a lost pilgrimage route, rediscovered from Britain's oldest road map – [the Gough map](#), dated c. 1360.

So where did this path go? Well, it went the same place as all British pilgrimage routes once pilgrimage was made illegal in 1538. Once a route ceases to be walked, and when the infrastructure to accommodate pilgrims is dismantled, the old pathways simply fade, become overgrown and are forgotten.

If you are interested in reading more on this route you can find it through this link:-

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

Mary Blinks

FAMILY NEWS

In Memoriam

Norma Boorman

We were very sad to hear that Norma, who was an active club member for many years, both walking and dancing, died in December. I first knew Norma when she was Norma Muir, and after Jeff's death, it was lovely that she found Sid, who she married in 1988, to share her love of dancing. She had served on our committee for 15 years as our weekends organiser. We used to have two weekends a year, travelling down on a Friday evening, making our own evening entertainment of barn dancing and slide shows, walking all day Saturday and half day Sunday, leaving after Sunday lunch. The first one Norma organised in 1980 was in the very basic HF Guest House in Crowlink, on top of the Seven Sisters and cost £21! After that Norma organised many other weekends from Rye, Eastbourne, Canterbury University, Wye Agricultural College, Shanklin, Chichester, but a favourite was Dunford House, Midhurst which was like staying in a stately home. She also wrote an account in our history booklet 'Footsteps' about the club weekend in 1978 when 11 club members stayed in the Belle Tout lighthouse, when everyone had to go beachcombing for firewood! On Sunday afternoon when there was an exceptionally low tide, the owner took them to an old shipwreck along the beach from

Birling Gap, which was being excavated, just in time to see the recovery of a cache of gold coins that had lain hidden for 150 years! So many happy memories, but we send our condolences to her family.

Mary Blinks

Pam Pither

We were very sorry to hear that Pam Pither died in February so soon after losing her husband Ron last May. Both were very active members of the Club, with Pam becoming Rambling Secretary in 1990. Pam's appeal to resign in February 2001 coincided with the Foot and Mouth outbreak, when all walks were cancelled, but through the Club grapevine, we managed to keep going -and that was before we were nearly all on email! We explored seafronts and local parks and one day 30 of us travelled on the Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway, visited Dungeness Power Station and lighthouse and walked back along the seashore. Not many current Club members remember Pam, but a few were able to attend her funeral and express our condolences to her family.

Mary Blinks

Sheila, our Poet in Residence passed me a copy of her Christmas 2018 just too late for inclusion in the last Newsletter but here it is for your enjoyment, better late than never.

Our Christmas Poem 2018

Another year has just flown by
It went so quick, and I don't know why
We had a really lovely summer, sometimes too hot
That made up for all the rain we had it was an awful lot
Walks early in the year we'll not forget
The weather and the ground were wet wet wet
Looking for signs of spring, a new leaf or small bud
But when we look ahead all we saw was mud
Sometimes it was up to our ankles and even nearly to our knees
Just to stay upright we had to hang on to the trees
When it comes to the muddiest walk it will be of no surprise
It was Gill and Bob's Hever walk and that takes 1st prize
Our Lamberhurst walk, we hit a very sticky spot
But we had to get through it like or not
It was a miracle everyone stayed upright
We must have looked a very comical sight
Our memories have much improved this year
But not for our dear friend Jennifer I fear
On a bench is where she left her back pack
But with her name neatly tucked inside she wasn't hard to track
Thanks to Jenny, backpack and Jennifer were soon reunited
I'm sure she was very grateful and very delighted
Our Rotherfield walk was good, but the weather was hot
Back at Jackie's and Bob's his homemade lemonade really hit the spot
The garden was beautiful a delight to see
I'm sure everyone enjoyed it especially me
Now Toys Hill walk is not for the faint hearted
We know it will be tough before we've even started
Top of the hills with great views I have to say
But it's climbing those hills that take your breath away
Janet our leader missed two walks to her cost
Driving round the country lane she simply got lost
Two lovely walks one from Seddlescombe and one from Linton Church
Where she just didn't get there and left us in the lurch
That just leaves me to wish you all good Christmas cheer
and I will see you all next week if not next year.

Sheila Woods

EDITOR'S FOOTNOTES

Update on Groombridge Footpath and Burrswood

Janet has been in touch with Malcolm McDonnell, Ramblers Local Footpath Officer for Withyham & Frant, and he has updated us on the position regarding the bridge problems. He has also mentioned the Burrswood closure and has speculated about what this might mean for those Groups that walk there :-

“Claims for the path over the bridge have now been submitted to both Highway Authorities (KCC & ESCC) and they are currently debating where the actual parish boundary goes. I had ascertained that it followed the actual river, but if ESCC is correct; at the pint of the bridge the boundary is actually north of the river thus about 17 metres of the path including the bridge, is in East Sussex and about 4 m in Kent. But KCC are not convinced! It is important that this matter is resolved in case some smart lawyer acting for Bodle might use it to declare the claim invalid. Once this is cleared up I shall consider taking steps to request the Secretary of State (via the Planning Inspectorate (PINS)) to push the two councils to expedite the claims within one year on the grounds that the alternative route (via the B2110) is extremely hazardous for walkers, and that many of the 81 witnesses are very elderly and may not be with us in three years.

Meanwhile Bodle has not obstructed the bridge so walkers are still crossing it. However, some of them have been shouted at, quite abusively in some cases so using it is potentially a stressful experience.

On another matter, are you aware that Burswood has gone into liquidation and closed as of last Tuesday? The main gates off the Green are now shut so presumably permissive use of the lower driveway has now ceased. I don't yet know about the woods, access to most of which is also permissive.”

I thought footpaths through Burrswood would have to remain but it would now appear that they are only permitted paths and not read footpaths so I guess the next campaign will be keep those open.

Coach Trip

Sales of seats for our Cambridge trip have been going well but there are still places available. Please see the Booking Form sent out with this Newsletter and return it, duly completed, along with your payment to reserve your place.

Editor

Having a party?

The club now has 60 glasses, 48 wine and 12 tumblers. They are kept by Joan Scott-Goldstone and are available to use/hire for a small voluntary donation.

Joan's contact details are on the covering sheet of this newsletter.

Unfortunately you will have to supply your own liquid refreshment and comestibles.

The Walking Partnership

Some of you will have received an email from Celestine to advise you that Tunbridge Wells Rambling Club has recently joined The Walking Partnership. For those not on email the details are as follows:-

This partnership, supported by RWH Travel Limited, provides direct financial contributions to local walking groups to help with organising group walks, encouraging people to get out walking, helping to clear and improve footpaths, providing equipment to help walkers etc. Over the past 65 years, the company has given many millions of pounds to assist walking charities and conservation projects in Britain and the countries they visit on their worldwide holidays. Now our group can benefit as well.

RWH Travel Limited operates group walking and activity holidays in the UK and all around the world. Each holiday is accompanied by a qualified leader. Walking holidays are graded according to preferences and abilities and there is a full

range from sightseeing to hutting holidays. Their website is www.rhtravel.com, or you can call on 01707 331133 for more details or to order a brochure.

Remember when you book a holiday to quote the name of our group, and we will then receive a contribution of £10 per person on UK holidays, £20 per person on short haul holidays, and £30 per person on long haul holidays.

For more details, visit The Walking Partnership website at www.thewalkingpartnership.org.uk.