

NEWSLETTER July - December 2021

From the sofa of the editor.

I thought that I would write my missive from my sofa as it has been my main source of comfort (wife aside – I thought that I had better mention Pat here as she does read the newsletter) during the various tiers and prohibitions that have been our fate over such a long period.

Well here we are again with another newsletter. I nearly called it “The Picture Post” as you will find that there are many more pictures than usual.

When Brian, in response to the plea for content, said that he would find a picture for each of the last 10 years I jumped at the chance of having something to fill these pages as, at the time, I was struggling. His suggestion, of course, was quite appropriate in view of our forthcoming 90th Anniversary.

Even more appropriate is Mary’s lovely contribution as she is able to go back even further with her memories. Originally Mary didn’t think she had anything to contribute but a slight bit of arm twisting by me and she has certainly come up trumps once more. Thank you Mary.

Then out of the blue arrived Brenda’s contribution for which I am most grateful.

When I lounged down, I am typing this on the sofa after all, I hadn’t got a clue what I was going to say or put in this Newsletter. Many thanks to those that rescued me.

Please have a look at the details of our 90th Anniversary Summer Supper. Get your cheque books out, complete the form and send to Janet

Editor

GROUP REPORTS

WEDNESDAY 5 MILE WALKERS

It is difficult to know what to write this half year as more than half of it has been Covidly-locked-down so there had been no communal walking. It was only after 12th April that we got together once more and it was lovely to see everyone. I have been booking people into walks so we don’t have too many and, indeed, to comply with Government Guidelines so I have a record of those who walked in much the same way as the pubs can trace their customers.

I have tried to keep the walking in groups of 6, sometimes with two lots, most regularly with three groups. The bluebell walk in memory of Jackie was very popular so Bob led a dozen in the morning and I led another ten in the afternoon.



My lot rather naughtily huddled together for a group photograph and then parted to keep our distance once more. I have been asking the groups to stay well away from each other but still keep sight of the groups in front and behind with something like a hundred yards between. This usually works well but I must say there are times when I feel like I am trying to organise a litter of puppies and on one occasion which happened to be one of my own leads I managed to lose an entire group – thank goodness for mobile phones. Too much nattering and not enough concentration methinks.

So our walks have been very regulated but by the time you read this we should have passed the magical 17th May when we will once more be able to walk under the auspices of TWRC instead of on a ‘just friends’ basis and will not have to worry about separating everybody which will be a relief.

We have a really interesting programme lined up for the latter part of this session and for the coming one and I am grateful to all those who have offered to lead, without whom it would not be possible.

Janet Wilson

FRIDAY WALKERS

Here we go again! Since the last write-up, we have been through times of walking in pairs (after lockdown No. 2) heading into 2021 and then back into groups of 6 after clearance was given at the end of March 2021. Walking has been done on both Mondays and Fridays. We are currently very near the day (at the time of writing) of being back in full Friday mode, with mega groups (relatively speaking) being allowed to mix outside.

I've really enjoyed our walks in this period – missed our normal bigger group, but haven't missed the walkouts. Much more done on the fly, and if we cock it up, it soon gets sorted. We've tried some new bits on older routes such as a section through Cinderhill just north of Matfield and a walk from Goathurst Common with the luxury of a coffee stop at Ide Hill Community shop.

The New Year started with pairs of us trekking out from places mostly north of Tonbridge and fairly local such as Ightham, Leigh, West Peckham, Dunk's Green and Chiddingstone. The one from West Peckham east towards East Peckham Old Church was repeated in welly boot weather after an earlier walk on that route with cold, frosty conditions where the ground was solid. There are a couple of pictures from this walk – one of East Peckham Old Church and snowdrops in the church yard.



The wild life has been good to see and hear. A couple of herons were spotted by some ponds near Boarhill, little grebes on the lake in West Malling and we had a fantastic view of a buzzard being mobbed by a bunch of crows as we climbed the field track north of Brenchley. More recently a red kite (common in the Chilterns, but much less so in this neck of the woods) was spotted near Charcott and just this week we heard a cuckoo near Chiddingstone. A real treat was a sighting of countless brimstone (yellow) butterflies on a walk from Shoreham – we also spotted an egret in the river Darent. I particularly liked the spindle tree flowers (see picture) seen near Chevening, and the primroses



and cowslips have been particularly good this spring.

Easter arrived and we were back to six people again, followed by the opening of pubs (along with some trivial things like shops and hairdressers). We did a walk from Underriver which took in Romshed Farm where they are filming a new version of the Darling Buds of May. Later that week came the walk from the Halfway House at Brenchley - a gorgeous day but it was the first Friday when we could eat outside. It was rammed – cars were spilling out on both sides of the road and we had a long wait for food. Never mind, the chance of a decent pint of bitter trumped everything else. Following that, we walked from the North Pole near Watlington – a beautiful walk on a bright sunny day. Loads of wood anemones and bluebells. A couple of vineyards en route (these seem to be springing up in many places on our walks, notably at a mega site near Luddesdown – around 400 acres of



vines!) I have attached a picture from the North Pole walk – a gorgeous flowery bank at Pizzen Well with tree carvings perched on the top such as this rhino.

Maurice Dickens and Nick Churchill

Start the week with a country dance (whoops, I mean walk!) lockdown style!

With three others from the Friday group I've 'tripped the light fantastic' almost every Monday for the past year. Undeterred, through wind and rain, mud or drought, we've explored every inch of our dance floor: north of Tonbridge/Sevenoaks. And when rules so dictated we changed partners, and 'moved on', joining the next person week on week. Our steps grew stronger and more confident as knowledge of paths and places to walk grew, while fitness levels and sense of well-being increased.

The advantages of a small group, with no pre-determined programme, have become apparent. I've especially enjoyed the opportunity to tailor walks, allowing for conditions underfoot, avoiding exposure to howling north-easterlies, or finding shade from summer heat. So we've avoided Shipbourne winter mud by walking the Charts along the greensand ridge, chosen the open downlands of, say, Ryarsh in a gentle SW breeze when skylarks are on the wing or enjoyed the cool and quiet of Dene woods and Oldbury Hill when needed. Timing is more flexible, multiple stiles are no longer reason for a log-jam and parking a doddle!

Being few, we've had so many opportunities to stop and stare – and really appreciate the landscape, nearby trees or stunning views, spot tiny wild flowers or delicate butterflies flitting across our path, smell the wild garlic, lavender or bluebell perfume on the air or listen to bird song and calls. We've learnt from each other, sharing our knowledge of the natural world, be it something from childhood or gleaned on previous TWRC walks.

While preferring to rely on our map-reading skills, when pondering our exact whereabouts we have on occasion resorted to asking the 'gizmo' otherwise known as Maurice's Garmin sat-nav (details below*). It can put one's mind at rest, save unnecessary mileage for ageing legs and best of all provide a record of where you've been for future reference (and where you went wrong!). The attached map shows a recent walk from the North Pole (pub!) when the photo of the mill pond at Wateringbury was taken.

It will be good to catch up with others on the regular Friday walks but I've enjoyed my 'country dances' so maybe the habit of starting the week in this way will survive



North Pole Walk



Pizzen Well



Wateringbury Walk from the North Pole

Brenda Mullinger

Ably 'partnered' by

Eileen Horrocks, Maurice Dickens and Susan Law

* It is called a Garmin eTrex Touch 25. Not a very inspiring name! Garmin is the manufacturer and also the provider of free software which enables you to download GPS data from the gizmo and translate it into the routes and maps we print out / store on the computer. The gizmo has a built in compass and OS mapping (1:25000) approx. 2.5 inches to 1 mile (or 4 cm to 1 km) covering most of Kent and Sussex where we usually walk.

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

Our Anniversaries

Did you know that our wonderful Club is now 90 years old? It got me looking back in my old programmes at our previous anniversaries, and I was particularly struck by our 50th birthday in 1981, which turned out to be a very eventful year. In March we had an Anniversary Ceilidh organised by Sylvia Richardson, when I was presented with a set of antlers for our Club, which had taken part in a sponsored walk and raised the most money for the Ashdown Forest Conservators' appeal for a Forest Centre, machinery and staff. The antlers were displayed in different members' homes for a number of years until they were sold, and the money used to buy an urn for the Club's use, which is now in the care of our Membership Secretary.



Among the archive material I was given when I was on the Committee was a notebook with handwritten details of the Club's walks from its formation in 1931. It grieves me that I have lost this precious relic, but before it was lost, I was able to trace the route of the first one, and repeat it on the exact anniversary 30th May 1981 starting from Crowborough Cross. We were joined by 3 founder members, stopping for tea and cake at Groombridge Station, to the surprise of British Rail passengers, before we finished in Tunbridge Wells. A lady from the Crowborough Field



Society came to give us a talk about the history of the area between Crowborough and Eridge through which we walked.

In July 1981 Frank Elliott had devised a 50 mile walk divided into stretches of various lengths from Borough Green to the foot of Leith Hill using a coach. It all worked with military precision, and one member walked the whole distance on the day!



Yet another big event in that memorable year was the opening of the Wealdway at Camp Hill, Ashdown Forest, of which I have written recently because of the dedication of Geoff King, our King of the Wealdway. I have been fortunate enough to repeat that first birthday ramble for our 60th and 75th anniversaries, and many of us remember the latter for the awful weather when we all arrived for our tea and cake at the ToCH Hall in Tunbridge Wells like a lot of drowned rats! No photos to show you of that! But long may our Club continue!

Mary Blinks

FAMILY NEWS

An appreciation of Harry Harwood

A few of us attended Harry's funeral, who died in December a few days after his 98th birthday. Harry and his wife Mary had lived happily in care for 4 years, but had been regular leaders for the Club Sunday all day and afternoon walks from 1987 to 2004. Harry was also a keen photographer and would entertain us at our social evenings with slides of our Club rambles, and also of their many travels abroad, sometimes with members of the Club on one of Norman Bells' walking holidays. It was one of those evenings on the Czech Republic when he showed us Cesky Krumlov-such an amazing place; I really had to go there! And a few years later I was able to spend 3 nights there. Another memory is sharing the car with Harry to join a ramble, when we came to a complete standstill on the A21 for an hour or so, because a horse was loose on the road. Harry calmly got out his flask of freshly ground coffee to share, which passed the time quite happily, and we were still able to meet the group and finish the ramble. Even when he gave up walking, he retained his membership and kept in touch with everyone by organising pub lunches. We send our condolences to his widow, Mary, pictured in this photo of Harry's.



Mary Blinks

And some Memories from Yvonne Spencer, previous Wednesday organiser:-

Harry was a real dear and a stalwart member of the Wednesday group. I can still hear Mary saying, "Mind your head, Harry" whenever we walked near some overhanging branches. And a vivid memory is when Harry was lost on one foggy walk when he had his own personal comfort stop without telling anyone. Mary then found her lunch and Harry were missing! Retracing across the last few fields with the aid of whistles I located a very relieved Harry, (no pun intended).

A lovely walk that they led was from Catsfield, near Battle to Penshurst, where we had lunch in the beautiful churchyard. Harry had arranged permission from the Ashburnham Estate for us to walk through part of the grounds so that we could make a circular return to our cars. It was a joy to repeat this walk after a year or two.

Yvonne Spencer

George Holt

George Holt was a much loved and respected member of The Club who walked with the Friday Group. Sadly last summer he passed away and, due to lockdown restrictions with limited numbers, it was not possible for us to attend his funeral although we were able to see it on line.

Back in 2012 George gave me one of his walks to lead as, with the chemotherapy he was having at the time, he could not commit himself to leading on any specific day. He took me out to show me the ropes and we had a good old natter (and I fell flat on my face on a bridge crossing the A.21).

The lifting of restrictions on 17th May was good timing for me to lead George's walk in his memory as we were able to have greater numbers out of doors and it coincided with what would have been his 90th birthday.

Fourteen people attended the walk and at the lunch afterwards we were thrilled that Valerie (George's wife) and Keith (his son) were able to join us along with some other 'old' friends like Pat and Wendy who used to join George on shorter walks towards the end, aimed at finishing at the same time at the same pub for lunch and a natter.

Keith Holt very generously treated us all to a drink at the pub so we could raise our glasses in George's memory. Photo in the pub garden with Keith and Valerie seated.



Janet Wilson

Brian's Pictures



Rotherfield
July 2012



Marden
September 2013



Wadhurst
April 2014



Margate
2015



Oxford
May 2016



Shipbourne
2017



Lamberhurst
2018



Four Elms and
Bough Beech
April 2019



Langton Green
November 2020



Staffhurst Wood
April 2021

AND FINALLY

Giving it the bird.

In the last Newsletter I reported on my escapade with a sparrowhawk and Percy the racing pigeon. Whilst I cannot report on such excitement in the Editor's household I can report on further ornithological happenings.

Some of you may know that we live in the countryside and have a 2 acre field behind the house. What goes on in the field when we are not out there is beyond our ken. We do see rabbits scurrying away when we get to the gate into the field and we often disturb little furry things. Across the ditch that divides our field from the next one are some fishing lakes. I don't know whether there are any fish but there is certainly a substantial flock of Canada Geese and for the first time ever we have seen families parading around our side of the ditch with the goslings being shepherded around by the parents. Earlier this year, when mowing, I was bombarded by a squadron of swallows catching the insects that I was disturbing.

Every year we are visited by a number of female pheasants. It is not uncommon for us to walk down the garden to the veg plot and with a whirring of wings to see a dozen females take off from between the plants. They try to nest just outside the back gate and I have come across the odd nest in the middle of the grass in the field.



Well this year we have seen only one female and this one was just outside our back door clearing up seed spilt from the bird table. We have however, very unusually, been visited several times a day by a male pheasant in all his glory - Pat calls him Bertie. We know he has arrived because he lets us know with his call - 5am seems to be a favourite time! He is adept at clearing up the spilt seed and sprints away down the garden creating a distinct track in the grass and in the bare earth of the veg plot. The visits went on for several weeks until one day there he was as usual but his sprint was no longer a sprint but more like a hop. Bertie was now an invalid with a poorly leg that he didn't really want to use. Nothing we could do so we just left him to his own devices. Bertie continued to come but after two or three weeks we realised his leg was improving and eventually the hopping turned into a jog and then into a sprint with an odd hop thrown in. Phew! It looked as if Bertie was back to full health.

The puzzle is - where are all Bertie's wives being hidden as we have only seen one?

We have also had a blackbird nesting in our log shed. The female took real umbrage when I went to get some logs me not realising she was there. Naturally I had to have a look in the now vacated nest where there looked to be five or 6 eggs. We assiduously avoided going near the log shed as much as possible but did have a peak from time to time. Some chicks hatched eventually and grew at an astounding pace. When I thought they were big enough to not be worried about having their photograph taken I could see that there were 3 bouncing babies. Photograph was duly taken and I did this just in time as next day they had flown the nest.



As I sit here I am listening to half a dozen starlings squabbling around the bird feeders.

Finally Finally do enjoy getting out walking again. The open air is the best place to be - even in the rain!