

# NEWSLETTER July - December 2022

## EDITOR'S RAMBLINGS

Well doesn't time fly when you are enjoying yourself! It seems like only yesterday I was sitting in our little office gazing at the garden and thinking about starting the last newsletter but here we are again.

So far this year we have had a virtually full programme for all groups – good isn't it!

Our AGM was held after missing out on the previous two. Sheila did her usual excellent buffet and we welcomed two new members onto the committee, Rosalind and Jack, whilst Maurice had his committee membership formally confirmed. Janet, as seems usual these days, tried to set a new time record for the AGM, but I am not sure she managed it. Several pictures of stiles were exhibited, and one was chosen as the worst and very worthy of having our footpath money spent on. This stile just happens to be the last one on a walk that I lead at Brenchley.



It must be reported that our esteemed leader, Janet, decided that most of her walking would be around the promenade deck of a cruise liner crossing the Atlantic. This meant that she felt unable to do justice to the antics of her Wednesday rabble's walks and asked if somebody could write something. Luckily there was one volunteer, young Thomas's hand shot up – maybe two pieces of chocolate cake and a biscuit had helped! (Picture with kind permission of James) and Brian offered to assist. See Brian's unique take on the Wednesday 5 milers.

*Editor*

## GROUP REPORTS

### WEDNESDAY 5 MILE WALKERS

#### **The Wednesday Walkers in 2022.**

It's an absolute pleasure to report on the Wednesday Walkers (5 milers) since the beginning of this year (2022) which, save for the first walk on 5th January, has been free of Covid interruptions.

#### **The Wednesday Walker - General Movement.**

In the right direction but getting slower (an age thing) and some of our group are less mechanically mobile than hitherto but each week manage to pass their "MOT" through admirable determination.

Ron W who has been a mainstay over the years has reluctantly had to drastically reduce his appearances, as has Guy M who's been flirting with the NHS for some time but is expected to return to the fold in the not-too-distant future. Sheila S has now given up leading after many years of support to the group. Carol G is hoping to return to walking, fitness permitting.

#### **The Wednesday Walker - A Profile.**

The average age of a Wednesday Walker is 75 years. They are more likely to be a female, with 22 active walkers in this category as opposed to only 9 men. In fact, the picture of our exploits this year is quite illuminating. We have averaged 17.8 walkers every Wednesday and we are trying to figure out who is the 0.8 of a person within our ranks. Rather than set up an enquiry, we're hoping the person will come forward and confess to being "not all there".

#### **The Wednesday Walker - It's All In The Genes.**

When it comes to negotiating the stiles and other hazards enroute our observations conclude that having a slight/petite build has its advantages. It is noticeable how Sue B, Sue W, Beryl, Jenny, Joy, Julie and Nesta effortlessly glide over these barriers without drawing breath.

### **The Wednesday Walker - Fashion Statement**

Of course, the group wears suitable and appropriate walking attire but that doesn't stop Gill F from showing a full range of colour coordinated clothing to brighten up the day.

### **The Wednesday Walker - Walks on Water.**

Well, this individual gets close to doing this because no matter how wet and muddy the weather conditions are, her boots remain clean and gleaming. Well done Jennifer W. Of course, it's standards!

### **The Wednesday Walker - Highly Competitive.**

Both Charlie B and Adaire W are staking their claim for Back Marker of the Year award. I think things will turn nasty between the two as prize giving gets nearer.

### **The Wednesday Walker - Equine Mastery.**

When we encounter the horses, it is Bob H who has an absolute affinity with them by not only whispering to them but recently resorting to showering them with his tender kisses.

### **The Wednesday Walker - The Matriarch**

Of course, this is Janet W. It is she who gives us our *raison d'etre*, brilliantly administers our weekly business and provides overall very good leadership and direction. All achieved through hard work.

### **The Wednesday Walker - The Future.**

Some might say we are slowly becoming the Wobbly Wednesday Walkers. But fear not and don't despair. In recent times we've not only had our injections against Covid but also an injection of new young blood to Wednesday walking. Lisa Maynard and her brother James Gillett have joined us and have and will be leading walks. In addition, Pat S (*she has retired at last, so I have no escape -Ed*) and Barbara S are now regular walkers.

### **The Wednesday Walker - The Editor.**

My thanks to Peter without whom this update would not see the light of day.

### **Our Wednesday Walks**

5th January was cancelled due to Covid.

12th January. Goudhurst. Led by Julie (13) A bright sunny day. Very muddy and slippery in places and a little difficult to walk in.

19th. January. Toys Hill. Led by Brian Gillett. (6) A dry day for the walk but rain when we finished at 2pm. A hilly and challenging walk but with good views of the Weald.

26th January. Kilndown. Leaders Sue & Adaire Williams. (24) An overcast day but dry and most of the mud had disappeared. This was the walk where Sue "Led from the rear". Had our lunch stop in Scotney Castle sat at tables and on wooden seats. Quite luxurious. We all sang happy birthday to Ron and had birthday cake with our refreshments after the walk.

2nd February. Groombridge. Leaders Ron & Sheila Wood. (27). A pleasant day and James brought Dudley and Teddy (his dogs).

9th February. Brenchley. Leader Peter Stallwood. (23) A bright and sunny day. Some had difficulty over the last two stiles especially the last (*Both were nominated as worthy of repair at the AGM. One has been improved with the other winning the vote- Ed*). Heather slipped over on the steep slope at the end. She was not injured, and her clothes were slightly muddy.

16th February. Edenbridge. Leader Janet Wilson. (17) Slightly overcast. Due to heavy rain in past twenty-four hours the fields we walked across were heavy in water- soggy walking conditions. Most of us wore our wellies. A couple of stiles were fairly difficult to climb over.

23rd February. Mereworth Leader June Waghorn. (18) Fine day until 1pm, then turned grey and cold. (*See Maurice's pictures below of the redwoods- Ed*).

2nd. March. Matfield. Leaders Jean & Charlie Bowden. (13) A slightly overcast day and mild temperature for time of year. Ground very muddy and boggy and with overnight rain, a number of puddles everywhere.

9th March. Leigh. Leader Gill Fermor. (18) Ground very soft and very muddy in places.

16th March Penshurst. Leader Sue Brown. (17) Another mud ridden walk and slippery under foot in places. Bob F and I gave Heather help in the boggy and slippery ground, and she was determined to get to the end. For the last mile Brenda also struggled but by taking things in a steady fashion arrived back at the start just a little weary. We had chocolate cake to celebrate Janet's birthday.

23rd March. Bodiam. Leader Jenny Mitchley. (15) Weather was beautiful and sunny. The weather has been very good for a fortnight until 28th March.

30th March. Yalding. Leader Sheila Springett. (17)

6th April. Shipbourne. Leader Lisa Maynard. (11) Two light showers and muddy in places.

13th April. Four Elms. Leader Brian Gillett. (24) Plus two dogs., Dudley & Teddy. Jenny delivered the mini-easter eggs.

20th April. Edenbridge (Bluebell Walk.) Leader Bob Houlston. (17) Beautiful Spring Day and plenty of Bluebells to see.

27th April. Shipbourne. Leaders Gill & Bob Fermor. (21) plus Dudley & Teddy

4th May. Five Oak Green. Leaders Jean & Charlie Bowden. (18) Pleasant weather. Ground very dry and hard.

11th May. Southborough/Bidborough. Leader Sheila Wood. (21) Ground very dry and hard - no rain for days!! *I didn't realise that we had a couple of swingers with us. -Ed.*



18th May. Collier Street. Leaders Peter & Pat Stallwood. (15) A hot walk and again the ground was bone dry and very hard. Came across three horses and the group were keen to get up close and personal with them. Kisses all round. Good photo of Bob kissing the horses!!!



25th May. Cranbrook. Leader Janet Wilson. (14). *We were all in trouble for meeting in the wrong place! - Ed.*

1st June. Matfield. Leader Sue Brown. (24) Plus two dogs, Dudley & Teddy. Lovely weather and ideal for walking. Bob Houlston said hello to two horses who became quite friendly and up close and personal with one horse coming face to face with Teddy.

Brian Gillett

## LONGER WEDNESDAY WALKERS

Yet another very wet winter which meant mud and slipping and sliding everywhere. Even a walk on the 6th April from Eridge, which is normally dry at that time of the year, was muddy all the way round. However, the winter weather has produced some spectacular displays of bluebells and wild garlic this Spring and they have appeared earlier and lasted longer than I can remember previously.

We regularly have about 15 walkers now as some have joined us from the Sunday group. We are very pleased to welcome them as they have led new walks that we haven't done before. Also, a big thank you to two new(ish) walkers Bob and Keith who have led new walks this year and plan to do many more.

Usually, we arrange to end up in a tearoom for tea and cakes afterwards and some of us have even taken to have coffee before the walk! However, because of this, we have managed to persuade garden centres who have cafes to allow us to park on their property for the duration of the walk which is very helpful as finding somewhere to park 10 or more cars is becoming a problem.

*Eric Botley*

## FRIDAY WALKERS

The last six months has been notable for a few extreme weather events - more to follow! In addition, our choices of watering holes after the walks are becoming more restricted, as there are fewer staff around in the establishments.

The year started off well – I barely had to get out of bed for the first one led by Christine Simpson from North Tonbridge. This was followed by a bit of country (Chiddingstone Causeway / Nigel) and town (Tunbridge Wells led by Janet). Jane led us down and then back up the hill, starting from Bidborough Ridge – a bit sticky on the way back up. Next up was Ian, starting from Ide Hill – the heavens opened even before we started, and it continued to hammer down for the first half of the walk. However, this slacked off nicely before the end and we finished in the Cock Inn back at the village – the bloke in there did everything from taking the orders, serving the beer, bringing the food, and taking the plates away all on his own! Brenda then led a lovely walk from the Hop Pole at Wateringbury.

The next week saw a cancellation of the walk – Storm Eunice hit the Southeast with winds up to 80 mph (at the Needles, it got up to 120 mph!). Good decision, as there was quite a bit of storm damage. I went out on the following Wednesday in the woods near Mereworth, and some of the tall redwoods in a double avenue of trees bit the dust (see pictures).



The following week was Celestine starting at the Giggles Pub on A22 in Ashdown Forest near Nutley. This was a great walk, but very wet and slippery underfoot with plenty of mud – one bit with a stile in a low boggy area – MD scrambled up a bank above the stile to escape the wet and then needed Celestine's poles to negotiate the bog on the other side of the stile! The pub was a delight, run by a West Indian family, a West Indian man who married a British woman in Barbados, and a son (a lovely bloke) who served us. The ceiling above our table had an area above it with the date "3<sup>rd</sup> Dec 2018" written on it – the son told us: - 1) It was the date the Giggles pub opened and 2) that bit of ceiling collapsed on the people who were sitting there – they just happened to be plasterers and they repaired the ceiling!



Next was a new route for us based on a High Weald Welly walk (used by Brenchley CE primary school) starting at the Halfway House (no prizes for guessing who led this one). I looked at the estimated walk time on the leaflet (4 hours) and then realised that this was the timing for little legs! We had our halfway stop at the wooden adder and outdoor classroom in Cinderhill Woods, just north of Matfield. The weather was overcast and very muddy underfoot.

The next couple of walks were from Broadwater Warren (Nick and Diana) and Friars Gate (Sylvi). I always like Broadwater Warren and we get to see the Polish Konik ponies. The walk from the old Deer Stalkers Pub at Friars Gate was a lovely walk which incorporated a fair bit of road walking to cut out some of the inevitable Q1 mud. Lunch was at the Crown at Groombridge – always good.

The next Friday just happened to be April Fools Day, starting from Stansted (Kent!). It was an unseasonably cold day with 3 or 4 snow/hail flurries! Good job they were at our back for the most part, or the leader would have copped some serious flak! Some nice views back to Stansted at the break and also across to the QE2 bridge and Canary Wharf. Great food at the Black Horse at Stansted and a new beer (Bexley Brewery). The walkers on that day (plus me) are shown at the halfway stop (see picture).



Your correspondent missed the rest of April (a combination of holidays and a bout of Covid-19) but returned to the fold at the beginning of May. Next up was a walk which was led by Susan L from the Toad Rock. This was to have been led by our other Susan (Sue Westlake), but I was really sad to hear that she won't be walking with us in the future due to her arthritis. It was a good walk – again sad that we couldn't all use the Toad Rock pub at the end due to chef issues.

Eileen led us from Shoreham the following week - I swear we saw the same egret in about the same place in the River Darent at Shoreham as the last walk that Eileen led! Lovely walk with the odd brimstone butterfly. We had a new watering hole (the Crown) at the other end of the village. Our usual (the Kings Arms) was undergoing renovation after a fire. Janet's walk from Cranbrook was next – the weather was atrocious – the forecast was bad, but we didn't expect it to be so bad! Continuous rain from start to finish – it eventually stopped as we were changing our shoes at the end. Difficult to take in much of the walk as we were well and truly dressed up for the elements. Felt really sorry for our leader! Finished at the George in Cranbrook – always a welcoming pub with good food and beer.



The last one in May was led by Diana and Nick from Hosey Common. We finished up at the Cock Horse, Ide Hill (again!). It was a lovely day (especially after the previous week!) with lots of sun and dry underfoot. Pretty hilly, but a lovely panorama from the Toys Hill viewpoint at the break (see picture).

*Maurice Dickens*

## SUNDAY WALKS

Once again Dermot got our Sunday walks off to an interesting start, firstly by starting at Sissinghurst NT before the gates opened! Then he proceeded to carry a saw to remove some fallen branches, so we didn't have to limbo dance! The following Sunday we got in the car park but were worried that the gates would be locked on our return, but all was well!



In February it was raining so hard at 09.30, we all piled into Kingdom Cafe with time for coffee until it stopped! Then came storm Eunice which caused a cancellation. We had a good turnout the following week, starting from Tonbridge, walking in the Medway valley over Hartlake Bridge, scene of the hoppickers' disaster of 1853, passing Cataract Cottage with a plaque for March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1892, commemorating the date of the first cataract operation



We then enjoyed some historical interest on a couple of walks, one encountering a dig in Otford, another exploring a cave hiding an ancient shrine! The leader also had to sound a horn to alert some clay pigeon shooters of our approach. The sound of their guns echoing all around had been quite alarming.



Springtime found us walking through heavenly bluebell woods and wild garlic, looking for wild orchids, listening to the birds, along with negotiating some tricky stiles. We have been lucky to have gained some new members to our Sunday group who are now leading walks too. And once again it's a big thank you to Janet for getting the programme together.

*Mary Blinks*

**EDITOR'S BIN END**

Pat's retirement and the end of not having to stay near to home means that we will be able to do more walking in other parts of our glorious countryside. So far, we have managed to have a couple of weeks away and had an enjoyable day on Dartmoor and a short excursion on the SW Coast Path – picture looking down on Sidmouth on a glorious sunny day. We were vastly amused by the slogan on the tanker that visited the campsite where we were stopping with our motorcaravan – “This Tank is Full of Political Promises.”



Our future plans include walking in the Peak District around Castleton. Wandering round the countryside near Barnard Castle – after an eye test. The Scottish Borders are also on the itinerary.

Wherever you go in 2022 do have a good time, good weather, good health and keep on walking.

*Editor*