

NEWSLETTER July – December 2024

EDITOR'S BEGINNINGS

How variable has the weather been. Sunday and it is lovely and sunny outside but a couple of days ago it was so cold in the house that I put the central heating on. There has, however, been a consistent theme to this year's walk -MUD. Things do seem to be drying out a bit and Pat and I have managed to get out into the fields near home instead of keeping walking up and down the nearby farm drive to get our steps in so our Fitbits don't complain!

One of Pat's and my best walks so far has been the lovely day we walked out the Linton walk I was leading on the following Wednesday. We wrapped up warmly as it was very chilly when we left home but after a short while from leaving the car at Linton we were starting to shed layers – the sun had certainly decided to put his hat on! Our luck was also holding on Wednesday when we all stopped for lunch in the churchyard at Boughton Monchelsea. The sun was beaming down and, as we sat overlooking the deer park, we could see more deer than I have ever seen there before.



The AGM in March went well despite an initial hold up getting into the hall – the puppy training class hadn't been told that they needed to be out promptly as we were booked in. Janet got us through the formal part of the meeting in her usual efficient manner and then the hungry hoards made short work of the buffet – thanks to Jan for organising this. Len's quizzes were always a might too difficult for some of us but Janet's raised the bar to world record levels. Suffice it to say, I was not on the winning table as usual.

Editor

GROUP REPORTS

WEDNESDAY 5 MILE WALKERS

As I sat down to write this piece for our Wednesday Five Mile Walkers I said how sorry I was to have missed so many who are suffering ill health and listed them and their problems individually. However, that was rather like a telephone directory and somewhat depressing so I will simply say that to those of you who have not been able to walk recently we all wish you well and hope to see you again before too long. At least we have been able to welcome Rosemary and Sally to the fold and they have become active members and we are all enjoying their company (see Sally's poem later in the newsletter -*Ed*).

Despite the depletion of the group, we have managed a full and interesting programme to places far and wide, uphill, and down dale, mainly sloshing around in mud. I have been walking in wellies for what seems like for ever and wonder whether I will be able to discard them before next winter is upon us. The forthcoming programme is also most varied thanks to my band of (willing?) leaders.

Having given up trying to arrange a Summer Supper for the whole club I have, instead, organised a supper just for our group taking a table or two in a restaurant instead of a room to ourselves and there are 30 of us looking forward to that at the end of August.

Janet Wilson

THREE MILE WALKS

This group remains small and it is difficult to find people to lead which puts pressure on the few who do, having to lead more than one walk in each three monthly programme. It has been suggested that it might improve when the weather improves but how long do we have to wait for that! I think that, as we all get older and less able to do the longer walks, it might become more in demand so I will try to keep it going.

In the forthcoming programme Sue Hammond, as a departure from the norm, will be leading a Dickensian Walk in London. Details are in the programme.

If this, or anything else, would be of interest to you but you are not yet on the Three Mile Walkers mailing list then please let me know so I can add you to it - Janet 01892-610382; 07990-576081 or jmwilson212@outlook.com .

Janet Wilson

LONGER WEDNESDAY WALKERS

I have just found out from Eric that he had a second heart attack in March and he only started back out walking with the group in May. He does report that many of the walks were cancelled or cut short because of rain and mud. He hopes that normal service can be resumed and that there will be something to report in the next newsletter.

Best wishes for a continued recovery, Eric.

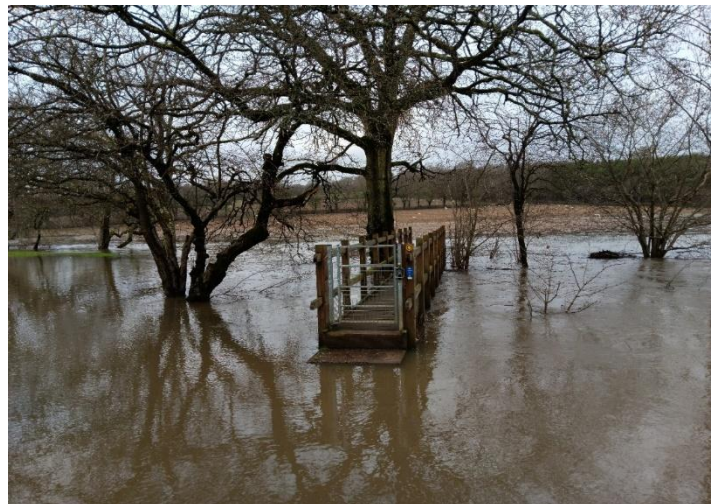
Editor

FRIDAY WALKERS

We kicked off from Southborough Common in January this year - Gerti O'Connor led a 3 miler. Just a few of us – very muddy but lovely circular walk with Southborough Common as the focus. Chanterelle mushrooms on route spotted by Gerti. Lunch at Hand and Sceptre – no draught beer again! However, the food was good - a “pizette” from the starter menu, which turned out to be a 12 inch diameter pizza! Sylvi led us from East Malling for our next walk. We liked this one – typically very good underfoot with only very few muddy stretches. Back to the North Pole for our lunch!

Next up was a walk from the Kentish Horse at Markbeech led by Chris Down. A very cold day, -3C at the start, but very bright and sunny. The ground was rock hard and icy in places – we had a few skidding incidents but got round OK. This was followed by a favourite (for me anyway) from the Halfway House at Brenchley. The weather was pretty nice after an extreme cold spell, but the first part of the walk was very slippery on the up and down section (now with blue ropes and posts) just after the house with the yellow door in Brenchley. However, the route involved more road walking than usual so much less mud! Good to see Carol at the pub afterwards.

Into February, with a walk from Nick and Diana from Penshurst Station, with the banana break on Leigh Village Green. We saw a great spotted woodpecker in a tree near Leigh. Pretty muddy in parts! This was followed by Janet's walk from Hartfield (rearranged because we couldn't do her planned TW parks walk from the Fir Tree Road car park in Tunbridge Wells due to a road closure). Note that this was a very, very wet week! The water was across the road at the Medway Bridge between Penshurst and Fordcombe – passable with care. The whole Medway valley from Penshurst to Hartfield was flooded. An initial muddy section to the railway line led to a foot bridge surrounded by water (see picture). Impassable, so we did a short walk up and down the old railway track towards Forest Row and back. We heard a mistle thrush singing on both passes of the railway track.



The last walk in February was led by John and Evelien from the Nevill Crest and Gun. An absolute mud bath on the opening stretch across the field on the High Weald Landscape Trail path then out round the perimeter of Broadwater Warren (BW) and back through the reserve – some horrendous muddy stretches. Just across the road from the BW entrance was a five barred gate (which we all had to climb!). The Eridge rock stretch was really nice to walk and lunch at the Nevill Crest and Gun was very good. We were glad to see the back of February – apparently, the wettest February in this neck of the woods since records began!

And now for Friday March 1st – I remember sitting having my breakfast in the Ashdown Park Hotel (after a big family celebration the night before, looking at the rain sheeting down and thinking “I wouldn't like to be out in this”) only to find that the Friday walkers (a small group, n=4) had done just that. Nigel led from Groombridge, and apparently piggy backs were required due to the very deep water encountered at one point.



Next was a walk from Ightham led by Ian B. In stark contrast, this was a lovely sunny day and good under foot. The section through the Basted Mill Woodland was very good. The mud was very dry and woody (came off the boots easily) and the road bits were dry as well. Lovely views towards the North Downs and also across to Wrotham Church and the Greystones oasts. A very pretty car park with loads of primroses – got to be the best of 2024 (see picture).

Our next walk was due to be Janet from Rusthall but the curse struck again! The Toad Rock Retreat had closed so Joan led from Lamberhurst, starting from the George and Dragon. Still very wet, but we got round - but the pub had no draught beer! Next up was Susan from Robertsbridge. The forecast on the day was not good, but Ian B's app proved correct and we had zero rain on the walk (it did rain while in the pub). Some muddy and wet bits, but much better after a couple of dryer days! Sarah did a 3 miler at the same time and took Geoff, Carol C, Eileen and Anne B with her. The George at Robertsbridge must be in line for pub of the year! Great staff and table service. The beer was interesting - Champion IPA from the Only With Love Brewery at Uckfield - a bit citrusy and piney (according to the tasting note) but pretty good! Also, a chocolate feast - 85% Green and Blacks plus Bendicks Bittermints!

Into April, and Ian B led us from Underriver (the White Rock). A really lovely day and a great walk. The pub did us proud – our first trip back to this pub after lock down. We even had Tony Conway with us, also Mary Daniel came for lunch. A blackcap was heard on Ian's Merlin software. Pretty good underfoot as well.

Next was Sheila from Pembury – Black Horse for our dinner. We started from the bottom of Church Road (at end of Lower Green Road). Absolutely gorgeous day, bright, sunny blue sky and warm. Not very muddy but a few stretches of wet ground. A bluebell wood section (picture) plus some beautiful purple spotted leaf orchids. Lots of sheep with lambs. The Black Horse at Pembury was superb – Timothy Taylor Landlord, Tribute and London Pride on draft. Another candidate for pub of the year. All the food very good – and lots of it – the meat pie looked particularly good.



The following week was MD from Danehill – a bluebell walk - finishing at the Coach and Horses. Bit overcast on the day - we just got some damp near the end and then torrential rain as we went into the pub car park – which was rammed! Very nice walk, bluebells very good, bit early for the cowslips, some wood anemones and yet again the skunk cabbage failed to impress on the day. We had 10 on the 5.5 miler and 6 on the 3 miler (kindly led by Sarah). The 3 miler route was as described by Fancy Free walks but did a short circuit back to the car park. On Sarah's walk we had Sarah, Sylvi, Christine S, Tony, Graham and Janet. The pub service was very slow for the 5.5 mile group - over an hour. However, the draught best bitter was excellent – a new one, Three Acre Brewery, near Blackboys east of Uckfield. Could be best beer of the year to date! Next up was Brenda from Dunks Green – MD away but has walked most of this enjoyable walk with Brenda.

Into May, starting with Janet from Hartfield – forecast a bit grim, but turned out OK with zero rain. This was the walk that Janet planned to do on Feb 9th this year but was flooded (see earlier). This time we got round OK – bluebells still around and some muddy bits. Dinner at the Crown at Groombridge. The Larkins bitter was on form this time.

Next was Susan from Shoreham – a grand day with lots of sun and warmth. The route was the Samuel Palmer (local artist) walk up from the village by the side of the river Darent, past Castle Farm (notable for boards on linseed field, hop fields, lavender fields, beef cattle and mixed crop planting (including clover) for crop rotation / nitrogen fixing). At Castle Farm we had coffee and ice cream and there were hop plants for sale including local types (Pilgrim and Wye Challenger). In the river at Castle Farm, we saw a heron and egret (on the walkout), Egyptian geese, mallards and ducklings and a wagtail (on the day). Turned left at the Lullingstone Park and Visitor Centre, uphill and past some lovely copper beeches (picture). Crossed the valley to Shoreham Cross and back into the village. Lovely views. Had our dinner outside at the Kings Arms – a first this year?



Jane led next from the Ashdown Visitor Centre. Great walk with a few muddy stretches – I hadn't started from there before. Some cracking views. Lunch at the Roebuck just around the corner from Cooling's Garden Centre and before the turn off for Danehill. A new pub for us – I liked it. Notable for a field en route full of multicoloured alpacas (picture).



On the last day of May, Sheila led from the Stubbs Wood car park near Ide Hill. Bit of a wet day (on and off) with very long, wet grass in parts. There were some stunning viewpoints and lots of ups and downs! On the return leg, we saw an impressive crop of a bright orange fungus on a moss-covered fallen oak tree trunk (see picture), identified as “Chicken of the woods” by Diana – it is apparently edible (and, needless to say, it tastes like chicken!)

Maurice Dickins

WEDNESDAY RAMBLE - SEVEN MONTHS IN!

At 10.15am or just after we meet for our ramble, we must be on time or it's a bit of a scramble!

There's Janet our Chair who keeps us in line, and we wander along often talking of wine!

There's Jenny the horse whisperer with mints in her sack, and Julie with her secateurs for plants to hack back!

There's Maisie the dog who is so well behaved & Honey the Lab who must always be bathed!

There's Sue on plants, whose knowledge is key, and of course not forgetting dear Bob with our tea.

I am the newbie and seven months in. And I'm loving the company, the views and the gin! (Did you think that was water in my bottle)

Sally Holdstock

EDITOR'S APOLOGY.

In the last Newsletter I meant to point out a very significant difference from previous Newsletters going back way before I started in the role. I must apologise for not giving recognition where recognition is well due..

The last Newsletter was the first for very many years that there was no input from Mary Blinks, first as editor and then as a contributor. Many thanks, Mary, for all your work over the years and I will always be grateful for the reports, articles and poems you have sent me.

Best wishes, Mary, with my personal thanks.

Editor.

THE WEBSITE

We still have problems in finding a website editor who knows what they are doing. If there is anybody in the Club who has the knowledge to do this or knows anybody who could help, please, please, let the Committee know. I did manage to update phone numbers on the present site but when I tried my hand at designing a new website my language was not fit for sensitive ears. Suffice it to say I gave up but Nick has taken up the gauntlet and is giving it a go. Good luck Nick!

DISCLAIMER

For the avoidance of doubt, it is confirmed that no Artificial Intelligence was involved in production of this Newsletter. It is left for readers to decide for themselves whether any other type of Intelligence was involved. I cannot comment further!