

Spring is sprung!

Help us celebrate our 20th!

Help!! We've arranged a great weekend away in a unique venue to celebrate our 20th Anniversary in September this year. We thought you'd all leap at it ... but you didn't! Bookings are slow, to say the least. If we have not achieved a reasonable number of deposits by 15th May we shall have no option but to cancel, which would be a real shame as well as, potentially, rather expensive.

We hope you've just been delaying your booking and this message will galvanise you into action. More information inside; contact Bryan ASAP if you need more details about accommodation options. Do help ensure that this unique event goes ahead.

Other events filling fast!

As we move into summer other events are filling up fast. The **JULIAN ALPS** and **BRECON BEACONS** are full, but do contact the organiser to be on the reserve list. We still have one space for a man on our long weekend in **MEVAGISSEY**. It's only two weeks away so act soon if you want it. Also just a couple of spaces remaining for **EXMOOR**. Our last weekend of the year will be in **GRADBACH** in the Peak District for some classic walking, and bookings are open now.

It's a first!

We always seem to be begging for volunteers to lead walks so it's with pleasure – and a touch of amazement – that the Events Committee announce that events are confirmed for the rest of the year, with a volunteer leader attached to every one of them! So a really big thank you to all those who volunteered.

However, we have to repeat that record every year and we are well on the way to booking weekend and week-away events for 2011. Don't hesitate to contact the Events Committee with offers.

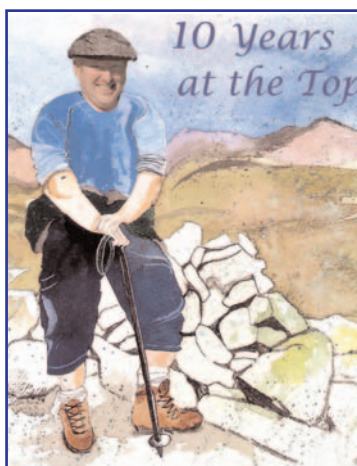
Round the Capital Ring

Tina, Michael, Liz and Malcolm report that the March Capital Ring arrangements went really well both travel and route wise. The earlier start meant we were back in St Albans about 5pm even with an 11 mile walk. We hope that to celebrate our 20th birthday as many members as possible will take part in at least one of the eight days of the walk. Stage 2 takes place in August – see inside for details.

If you just need to fill in a few sections on your own so you can receive the final certificate, we can provide you with all the travel and route details and perhaps link you up with others needing to fill in their route gaps. Liz has offered to supply all the information required, so contact her at lizholliday@hotmail.com.

At the AGM

Thanks to all those who came to the 2010 AGM, which turned out to be something of a milestone for SAR, with some major changes of Committee personnel!



*A tribute to Julian
SAR members both young and old
thank our Chairman Oh so bold
for leading us well both far and wide
across the British countryside.
But after a decade, sad to tell,
he is to hand over ... Oh very well,
we'll give the job to someone who
we hope will do as well as you.*

Sadly, pressure of work means Julian has had to step down as Chairman, a role he's performed with energy since our re-formation in 2001. Several overseas trips a month (or sometimes even in a week) are not conducive to demanding voluntary roles, so a big thank you to Julian: SAR would not be what it is today without his contribution. This event was marked at the AGM by a presentation of a card

and verse by Ray and a special celebration cake baked by Glenis for all to share.

Taking over the baton of chairmanship is Mike Shaw, who's been on the Committee for four years and who's a personal testimony to the old saying that if you

want something done, ask a busy person.

Joining the main Committee to keep up the numbers right is Anna Upton. We welcome her and note how nice it is to see some of our newer members taking so active a role. Anna commented: "Being new to St Albans and keen walker (veteran of several long-distance paths), joining SAR seemed a good way to meet people. I enjoy getting involved so being elected to the Committee was an added bonus. When not walking I enjoy gardening and reading and, as I work from home these is sometimes (especially when the sun is shining!) a clash of work and play."

The other key event at the AGM was the launch of www.stalbanrambler.com. Dee is care-taking the site for the time being but cannot do so in the long run so we are looking for a volunteer to become our webmaster (or mistress). You need to be reasonably computer literate with a broadband connection, but managing the site is pretty straightforward, as Mike, Dee and even Bryan can testify. For a look at what's involved contact Dee.

Other business at the AGM is recorded in the minutes which accompany this newsletter.

Forthcoming Programme

All events in May, June and July

Express interest!

Helps us get a handle on likely numbers. It does NOT constitute a firm booking.

Book now!

To secure a place you need to confirm your participation with the named contact and send them a deposit cheque payable to St Albans Rambler.

All monies paid to SAR are accepted on the understanding that members agree the terms in the Finance Policy.

Fully booked!

If you're interested in an event flagged fully booked, do ring the event contact. Participants drop out sometimes, especially for events planned a long way in advance. We may still be able to find you a space.

And apologies if you find many events fully booked. We have to work well in advance to secure the accommodation we want, especially at peak times.

Your ideas?

Please ring one of the Events Co-ordination Team if you have an idea for a walk or event or have seen a good place to stay. Even if you don't want to organise or lead, we can pass ideas on for further investigation.

SUNDAY 9TH MAY 2010

May Day Walk: Flaunden and the Chess Valley

Start at the Village Hall in Flaunden, heading south towards Chenies for coffee and taking our packed lunches on the banks of the river Chess near Sarratt Mill. Our return is through Sarratt and Commonwood (a nice pub here for a break and tea). Finally we skirt the edge of Chipperfield Common and return to the cars via Great Sarratt Hall. Just over 10 miles.

Last chance!

FRIDAY 14TH TO MONDAY 17TH MAY 2010

South-West Coast Path 5: Mevagissey

Our next stretch of the SWCP is in the beautiful area around Mevagissey in Cornwall, based at Boswinger YHA for three nights. Two less strenuous sections of the Path will be covered, with a mix of fabulous coastal views, fishing ports and country villages. On Monday, before coming home, we have the option to visit either the Eden Project or The Lost Gardens of Heligan.

Cost around £80 for three nights B&B and packed lunches. Travel using own transport.

Evening meals will be extra (either self catering or at local pubs). Just one space left for a man: to book send £25 to Pat and Ray (9 Bridle Close, St Albans AL1 4DL) now.



THURSDAY 20TH MAY 2010

May Evening Walk: Colne and Ver Valleys

From Moor Mill we'll explore the valleys of the Colne and Ver, taking in parts of Bricket Wood and Park Street. We'll cover about 5 miles and be back at Moor Mill to finish the evening with a drink at the pub.

Fully booked!

26TH JUNE TO 3RD JULY 2010

Julian Alps, Slovenia

The Julian Alps are the most south-easterly part of the central European Alps, and Bohinj is on the borders of the Triglav National Park, named for Mount Triglav ('three-headed') at 2864 metres. We are staying in the Hotel Jezero, centrally located in Bohinj, right by the lake, with a swimming pool, fitness centre, sauna, mini-golf and garden. There are boat trips on the lake and the possibility of a day trip to Bled Castle, as well as to other historical and cultural sites. Excellent, well-marked walks at both high and low level, supported by cable car.

www.bohinj.si/alpinum/jezero

Meg 01895 672621

SUNDAY 13TH JUNE

June Day Walk: Smallford and Around

A circular walk of about 10 miles starting at Oaklands College. We will pass the fishing lakes at Colney Heath and walk on the the Green Dragon, where we will lunch by the river. The we walk through Napsbury Park (passing the house where I was born!) and on to Ayletts Nursery for tea. Return through Highfield Park.

WEDNESDAY 23RD JUNE 2010

June Evening Walk: Wheathampstead

A 5-mile walk from Wheathampstead along the river Lea, up the Devil's Dyke to Nomansland and Amwell. We return along the Lea Valley Walk with time for a refreshing drink in Wheathampstead.

Joining a day walk

Please ring the contact a few days in advance for full details: start time, directions, car sharing, etc. They will look out for you, especially if you are a new member.

If you're unable to come please try to let the organiser know, so we don't keep the whole party waiting. Most organisers can give you a mobile phone number.

Your safety

Our leaders take all reasonable care for the safety of the party. But it's your responsibility to see that you are properly equipped, to take responsibility for your own safety and that of others. SAR has appropriate Public Liability Insurance but you should have your own personal accident cover.

Our next

Our next committee meeting will be 17th June. If you have items for consideration please send to Angela by 11th June. The next newsletter will be on 1st July 2010. If you have anything for inclusion, please send to Dee by 23rd June.

SUNDAY 11TH JULY 2010 *July Day Walk: Fingest*

We explore the delights of south-west Bucks in Vicar of Dibley country, a gently hilly summer walk in the Chiltern Hills, with a couple of pubs available for drinks and an ice-cream in Hambledon to finish.

TUESDAY 20TH JULY 2010 *July Evening Walk: Apsley and Kings Langley*

Jane is still working on the details of her walk but note the date in your diary and watch for more details in the July newsletter.

Last chance!

FRIDAY 23RD TO MONDAY 26TH JULY 2010 *Exmoor*

To make the most of the distance we are making this a long weekend, travelling down on Friday and returning Monday after a half-day walk. Our base is the YHA at Exford in the heart of the moor, a beautiful Victorian house with mostly small dorms.

Our Saturday route (about 10 miles) takes us to the Chains, one of the most extensive areas of unenclosed moorland remaining, and the source of many of Exmoor's rivers. On Sunday it's Lorna Doone Country. Starting in the valley of Badgeworthy, we pass through an atmospheric landscape of bracken-covered coombes, rock-strewn streams and empty moorland, made more attractive by its literary connections. On Monday morning (optional) we shall visit Withypool and Tarr Steps.



The cost of three nights accommodation with breakfast and dinner provided by the hostel and our usual DIY packed lunches will be around £100. You'll need to allow for travel to Exmoor and for optional meals at a local pub. Just two spaces left and we need to confirm numbers by the middle of this month, so if you want one of them act now by sending a cheque for £50 to Mike and Ginny.

Advance dates for your diary

SATURDAY 6TH AND SUNDAY 7TH AUGUST 2010 *Capital Ring Stage 2*

Our Saturday route (9 miles) starts at Highgate, where the underground station is the deepest in the network. We walk along the path of an abandoned railway track to Finsbury Park and Clissold Park. The original north London reservoirs and filter beds are here and the pumping station is now a museum. The 'New river', neither a river nor new, flows here. Abney Park Cemetery has the grave of William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army. We finish on Hackney Marshes.



On Sunday we walk along the canal towpath, cross rivers and move towards the Thames and the Olympic village. Later we explore the dock area of Woolwich and cross on the Woolwich Ferry to journey's end.

www.walklondon.org.uk

Liz and Malcolm 01727 851420

Fully Booked!

FRIDAY 13TH TO SUNDAY 15TH/MONDAY 16TH AUGUST 2010 *Brecon Beacons*

We'll be in the recently refurbished hostel at Llwyn-y-Celyn, right at the foot of Pen-y-Fan, the highest mountain in the Beacons range (pictured). On Saturday and Sunday we'll have full day walks in these splendid mountains, straight from the door. You'll have the option to stay over on Sunday night too, with a half-day walk on the Monday morning.

The hostel will cater for our breakfasts and dinners, but we'll make our own packed lunches as usual.

The cost of accommodation in 2- and 4-bed rooms is likely to be in the region of £75 pp for two nights or £110 for three nights. Owing to high demand we've upped the number of spaces.

Book Now!

**FRIDAY 24TH TO SUNDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER 2010
Special 20th Anniversary Dinner**

Harris Manchester College occupies a peaceful site in central historic Oxford (close to the Bodleian library), with its 'new' buildings dating from 1893 although some of the accommodation is in houses from the 17th century.

Our celebratory dinner will be held in the original, wood panelled dining room, with a set menu (and of course a vegetarian option – which we are assured will not be a vegetarian lasagne!). The college chef prides himself on using fresh local produce, meat from local farms, with home-made sauces etc. The College are offering us their special 'banquet' menu at the bargain price of £25 plus VAT and wine. We will have the College Steward in attendance for the evening.

Walking routes will be in the expert hands of our local Oxford resident, Gwyneth, who suggests a relatively short walk on Saturday over Shotover Hill, where – depending upon the weather! – we should have good views over the city. If you prefer, spend the day exploring Oxford. It **may** be possible to organise a tour of a university college.

On Sunday, a 9-mile section of the Oxford Green Belt Way for Cumnor to Wolvercote is a good walk, passing (perhaps visiting!) the Trout Inn, famous in many episodes of Inspector Morse. We'll finish at Gwyneth's for tea, plus cake provided by Glenis.

Tons of possible accommodation, from rooms in the College itself to camping on the city outskirts, via the Oxford YHA and B&B. Stay just for Saturday, or Friday / Sunday, as you wish. Bryan has details of the options available, so contact him soonest as some of these will be on a first come, first served basis.

www.hmc.ox.ac.uk



Book Now!

**FRIDAY 29TH TO MONDAY 31ST OCTOBER 2010
Gradbach**

The Youth Hostel, is a former Flax Mill and farmhouse in secluded grounds on the banks of the River Dane. The gritstone edge of the Roaches that forms the dramatic western boundary of the Peak District and the Three Shires Head where Cheshire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire all meet are both a short distance away. Saturday and Sunday we'll have full day walks. For those who wish to stay over Sunday night, there will be a half day walk on Monday morning.



The hostel will cater for our breakfasts and evening meals on Saturday and Sunday, but we shall make our own packed lunches. Accommodation will be in six-bed rooms.

Cost around £80 for two nights B&B, packed lunches and evening meal on Saturday or three nights around £110. To secure a place please send a cheque for £50 to Peter now.

Capital Ring Stage 1

Woolwich to Grove Park

There was a good turn out for this 1st stage of the 72 mile Capital Ring Path. Arriving in Woolwich we set out along the Thames passing the Royal Arsenal and former Dockyards set up by King Henry V111. We had fine views of the Thames Flood Barrier and Millennium Dome



Jacobean Manor House, now a community centre.

After Woolwich Common and South of Shooters Hill we came to a series of ancient woodlands. Oxleas Wood was a delight. As well as flora and fauna it held Greater London's highest point where Severndroog Castle a folly was erected in 1784 by Lady

1930s it was rebuilt by the Courtauld family with an Art Deco style interior.

We continued from here along King John's Walk where we enjoyed fine views of City landmarks including Canary Wharf, the London Eye, the Millennium Dome, St Pauls and Crystal Palace. A few more green spaces and streets to pass along

and we found ourselves at Grove Park having enjoyed a memorable day out. **Jenny**



Grove Park to Crystal Palace

Eleven resilient ramblers set off



Capital Ring Day 1, clockwise from top left. At the start in Woolwich. Explaining the route along the South Bank. A London skyline panorama. Julian with the big gun.

Turning our back on the river we walked through a mix of city streets and green spaces. An early park boasted a small farm where sheep grazed. At Charlton Park the local youth were out playing football. Charlton House sat proudly here, a

James of Eltham in memory of her beloved husband, William, who once attacked a pirate stronghold in the island fortress of Severndroog, off the West coast of India.

Directly below this we found the perfect lunch spot – a terrace with benches for all and amazing views over to the North Downs. Jack Wood and Castle Wood featured some formal parkland.

Heading on past Royal Blackheath in a south-west direction we came to Eltham Palace, one of England's foremost medieval royal residences and a venue for Parliament for some 200 years from the reign of Edward II. All that remains of this period is the 15th century bridge across the moat and the Great Hall. In the

from St Albans railway station on a bright sunny morning retracing our journey to Grove Park. Our route was varied, ranging from suburban streets and sports fields to large areas of parkland where we saw parakeets in the wild, presumably having escaped from domestic captivity.

We arrived at Beckenham Place Park in time for lunch and had a fine view of Beckenham House which is now part of a large golf course. We continued through Cator Park and headed towards Crystal Palace Park, a 200-acre park named after the large glass and iron structure that was built in 1851 for the Great Exhibition. It was apparently three times the length of St Paul's Cathedral. It was moved here from Hyde Park in 1854, and destroyed by



Capital Ring Day 2. Right, signboard at Beckenham Place Park. Above, meeting the dinosaurs.



must have been an amazing sight for Victorians visiting on a Sunday outing. We negotiated our way back on the train to St Pancras station and returned to St Albans following a very interesting and memorable weekend thanks to all the hard work and organisation put in by Liz and Malcolm. **Alison**

fire in 1936.

We wandered through part of the park and found the dinosaurs which were designed by two scientists from

the Natural History Museum and took two years to complete. These sculptures were very impressive and

Recent local outings

APRIL DAY WALK: CHESHAM. A fine and sunny, if slightly chilly, morning found our group of 21 (including leaders Anna and Paul) gathered for the start of our walk in Chesham.

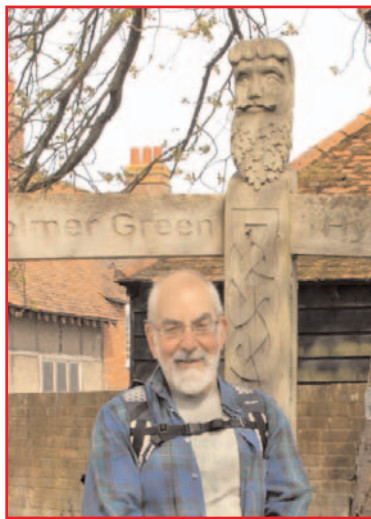
We started westward through the local park where many of the trees were covered in blossom, creating a cheering and colourful sight. We soon warmed up as we left the park climbing into open country and along a path called 'Herberts Hole', leading to South Heath. Here we turned southward through open farmland before entering a beautiful beech wood, just beginning to break into leaf, where we took a welcome coffee break. Continuing south through the woods we eventually took a footbridge over the railway and crossed the A413 to enter the beautiful village of Little Missenden where we enjoyed lunch in the playground. Entering the village we had an unmissable photo opportunity, getting shots of the group plus one of our new chairman Mike standing beneath a scary look-alike carved wooden effigy of himself atop the village sign post (see photo).

After lunch we continued through the rest of the village, passing the old water mill, before crossing back over the A413 and railway and heading in a north easterly direction toward

Chesham. With red kites circling overhead, we passed through a mixture of beautiful open countryside and

ancient beech woodlands with elevated views of Chesham spread out before us.

A very enjoyable walk on one of the best days of the year so far. **Ray & Pat**



Clockwise from top left. Mike meets his alter ego. Coffee break in the beech woods. Pat leads the way to the top. How many stiles is that?