

## Nineteen and counting ...

A new initiative for our 20th anniversary season next year sees us making the most of the surprising walking opportunities in London.

**THE CAPITAL RING** threads its way through London's parks and green spaces for 78 miles ([www.walklondon.org.uk/walks](http://www.walklondon.org.uk/walks)). We'll be tackling the whole thing in sections and there will be a special certificate for those who complete it. If you plan to do the whole distance, note the dates now: 9th/10th January; 13th/14th March; 9th/10th October; and 11th/12th December. Although we'll be walking both days of the weekend it will not be necessary to stay over on the Saturday night. There will be other celebratory events too.

Those of us lucky enough to be going later this month on our fantastic sounding week in the **LAKE DISTRICT** or our last weekend away of the year, tackling another stretch of the **SOUTH WEST COAST PATH** in October, are really hoping for an Indian summer. Sadly both these are now fully booked but plans for 2010 are shaping up nicely. Our **END-OF-SEASON DINNER** will take place in November and we're open for bookings and suggestions of what you'd like to cook.

Weekends away next year include the **SOUTH DOWNS** in February, based in a really comfortable hotel where we can walk straight from the door (details inside): this event is now open for booking. Details inside, too, for our week in the **JULIAN ALPS** (June/July) We are also planning weekends in the **GOWER** (April), **MEVAGISSEY** (May), **EXMOOR** (July) and the **BRECON BEACONS** (August) and a week walking part of **OFFA'S DYKE** (in September): more about these as plans firm up.

### First Aid – Express Interest

It's been some time since we ran a first aid training course relating to outdoor activities. If there is enough interest we are hoping to run one early next year. Before we make bookings we would like to have an idea of numbers interested.

We need around 12 people to make it worthwhile and SAR will subsidise the cost as usual. So, if you've never been on a course, or want to brush up your skills, why not come along? After all you never know when these skills may prove useful. Why not sign up ... the life you save could be mine!

Ray

### We are grumpy – official!

The Events Committee are officially grumpy – you can see them in their new teeshirts at a recent meeting. That's what happens when they have to grapple with finding volunteer leaders for our events!

Thanks, though, to all those who have led or organised an event this year, especially those who have done it for the first time. We value your assistance and couldn't run the group without you.

But we still need plenty of leaders for events in 2010: our regular outing on

the second Sunday of the month; a mid-week walk every month; and an evening walk



every month from April to August. We'd also really welcome support in planning weekends away, especially with logistics for our first crack at the Offa's Dyke Path (contact Julian).

Please do not be shy: we can offer you plenty of help.

### Why the Nickey Line

When we walked the Nickey Line recently, no-one knew how it got this name. So Peter's done the research and reports that this nickname applied to this line from the time it was under construction-and yet no-one has been able to discover why. Many theories have been put forward, such as the line being in the Parish of St Nicholas, that the navvies that built it wore knickerbockers or that the exhaust of the engines sounded like a much-repeated 'knickerbocker, knickerbocker' as they climbed the steep gradient up to Roundwood. Some of these, and many others, can be discounted because they could only apply once the line was open, but in fact the name only applies to the Harpenden end of the line. In Hemel Hempstead people referred to 'Puffin Annie' or Gentle Annie. What we do know is that the earliest printed references to the Nickey Line included the 'e', so we shall too.

Source; *The Nickey Line* by Sue & Geoff Woodman, Middleton Press 2006

### Don't you just hate 'em?

Kids, that is. No sooner has some six-year-old climbed all the 214 peaks in AW's Lake District guides than he has been outdone by a five-year-old (yes five!). Robin Regan was not yet three when he climbed his first (Binsey); his last – some 230,000 feet and 710 miles later – was Scafell Pike. 'I really liked some of the ones with rocks on. I like the grassy ones too with a lot of downhill so that I can run down fast.'

Bryan has added young Robin to the top of his very own hate list.

# Forthcoming Programme

All events in September, October and November

## 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.

THURSDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER 2009

### September Evening Walk: Sandridge and Childwickbury

Autumn's coming so this will be our last evening walk of 2009. An easy circuit from Sandridge village, via the picturesque hamlet of Childwickbury, and a chance to visit one of its three pubs later.

Fully booked!

SATURDAY 12TH TO SATURDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER 2009  
**A Week in the Lake District**

We've not visited the Lake District for a good few years and this looks to be a great week away. Shepherds' Cottage in Coniston village is on four floors and has two sitting rooms, a couple of four-poster beds, a secluded garden/patio and a general air of grandeur.

We're offering a variety of walks, taking in spectacular views of streams, lakes, mountains and seasonal colours, rather than conquering the highest peaks. However, there will be a couple of more challenging days out for those who want them.

Breakfasts and lunches will be catered in and evening meals will be a free choice: either cook and eat in or explore the facilities of nearby Coniston.

**Cost for transport by minibus, accommodation, breakfast and lunches £230.**  
[www.sykescottages.co.uk/cottages/1591php](http://www.sykescottages.co.uk/cottages/1591php)



Mike & Ginny 01727 865020

SATURDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER 2009

### Herts Hike for Oxfam

Whether you plan to walk one of the routes, from 3 to 18 miles, starting from Wheathampstead, or could simply help the day before setting out signage, Oxfam will be delighted to have your support. It's not necessary to be sponsored, but a donation to Oxfam funds would be welcome.

WEDNESDAY 21ST OCTOBER 2009

### October Weekday Walk: Tewin

A circular 6.5-mile route, crossing the River Mimram, taking in the village of Bramfield and its woods, and skirting Tewin on the return.

SUNDAY 11TH OCTOBER 2009

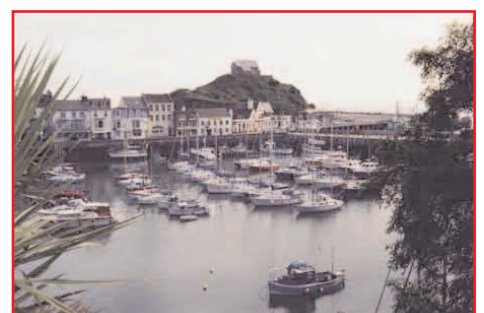
### October Day Walk: Berkhamsted and Ashridge

Starting from Berkhamsted, we will enjoy the rustic autumnal colour on this 10-mile circuit taken in a stretch of the Grand Union Canal, and visiting Ashridge and Frithsden Beeches.

Fully booked!

16TH TO 18TH OCTOBER 2009  
**South West Coast Path 4**

We'll be staying at the Ocean Backpackers Hostel in Ilfracombe, fantastically well placed right on the seafront (pictured) of this busy little town in a building dating from 1860, formerly home to a master boat builder. We'll explore some stretches of the northern side of the SWCP in our fourth visit to the UK's longest long-distance path. To justify the length of the journey we're making this a long weekend. We'll



## 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 22nd October. If you have items for consideration please send to Angela by 14th October. The next newsletter will be on 1st November 2009. If you have anything for inclusion, please send to Dee by 21st October.

be in en suite dorms for 8 people (max) and for food will self-cater or perhaps explore the gastronomic offerings of the town.

**Cost for three nights' accommodation and food likely to be around £100, but you will also need to allow for transport to Ilfracombe, perhaps some local transport too, and optional meal(s) out. Contact Meg to be on the reserve list.**

[www.oceanbackpackers.co.uk](http://www.oceanbackpackers.co.uk)

Meg 01895 672621

**SUNDAY 8TH NOVEMBER 2009**

### November Day Walk: Great and Little Hormead

Still part of Hertfordshire but the countryside looks different in this area to the east of Buntingford. We'll cover around 9 miles, part of it on the Hertfordshire Way, and as this is Remembrance Sunday we'll be observing the 2 minutes' silence at 11.00.

**TUESDAY 17TH NOVEMBER 2009**

### November Weekday Walk: Kew and Richmond

Meet at West Hampstead and take the overground to Kew where we start our 9 mile circuit. Over East Sheen Common and into Richmond Park for stunning views across London. Spot local bird life and perhaps deer at Penn Ponds, and on to Richmond Gate and Ham House via a splendid avenue of trees. Pub lunch or picnic overlooking the Thames before a 'yomp' back along the towpath passing Isleworth and Kew Gardens.

Book now!

**SATURDAY 21ST NOVEMBER 2009**

### End-of-Season Party

We're repeating our DIY celebration to mark the end of another season of walking which we hope you've enjoyed. We will again be at the St Michael's Parish Centre from 7.30 till 10.45. Besides the gourmet treats provided by our volunteer cooks there will be a table quiz with a modest prize.

If you are able to volunteer to cook a dish please let Dee know. We will have a list of the kind of thing we need to ensure that we don't end up with six shepherd's pies and no puddings! All costs will be reimbursed.

**Cost for the evening £8 per head; bring your own alcohol. Please send a cheque for £8 to Dee now to confirm your place.**



## Advance dates for your diary

Book now!

**19TH TO 21ST FEBRUARY 2010**

### South Downs

Findon Manor Hotel is actually the old rectory, the oldest parts of the building dating to 1584. Findon village appears in Domesday book and was once an important crossroads between the Lewes/Chichester coach road and the London/Worthing turnpike. The village is now bypassed and there is easy access on to the downs. We'll be taking over all the hotel's rooms and dining in the restaurant on Saturday. The hotel is also home to the Snooty Fox bar, which functions as the local pub and features in the Good Beer Guide. Early risers may see the race horses from the village's stable exercising nearby.

Close by are the impressive ramparts of Cissbury hillfort (over a mile round), site of a giant flint mining operation in the Iron Age. We will certainly walk there, and to nearby Chanctonbury fort and on Church Hill. Both Saturday and Sunday we shall be able to walk straight from the door, taking in parts of the South Downs Way and the Monarch's Way. Non-walking partners are particularly welcome at this event.

**Cost for two nights B&B plus dinner with drinks on Saturday and tea on Sunday afternoon will be just £120. NO single rooms, so there a £50 surcharge for single occupancy of a double. To book please send a cheque for £50 to Dee now.**

[www.findonmanor.com](http://www.findonmanor.com) [www.findon.info](http://www.findon.info)

Dee 01727 868765



**Book  
now!**

**26TH JUNE TO 3RD JULY 2010**  
**Julian Alps, Slovenia**

We will be staying in the Hotel Jezero (*below right*) centrally located in Bohinj right by the lake. Beside the fantastic local walking and scenery it has 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.

The Julian Alps are the most south-easterly part of the central European Alps, and Bohinj is in the south-east on the borders of the Triglav National Park, named for Mount Triglav ('three-headed') at 2864 metres.

**Cost per person half-board in a twin 462 euros or 532 euros in a single. Flights from Stanstead to Ljubiana are currently available at £125 and will be open for booking in December. You will also need to allow for airport transfers at both ends, lunches and incidental costs. To confirm your place please send a cheque for £200 to Meg.**

**[www.bohinj.si/alpinum/jezero](http://www.bohinj.si/alpinum/jezero)**  
**Meg 01895 672621**



## Recent local outings

**JULY DAY WALK: WHITCHURCH.** With an exit visa from Hertfordshire 15 walkers led by Liz at the front and Malcolm at the rear found themselves exploring some old and interesting parts of Buckinghamshire. All around were memories of the Civil War which had seen much action in the area.

The party explored four lovely old villages starting from Hardwick. Within yards we were passing a pub and some had to be restrained from delaying our start! We soon acquired a farm dog which did not want to go home just as we didn't. Eventually his owner came and retrieved it.

We entered and explored Whitwell, a delightful thatched village with cottages bedecked with hollyhocks. Houses had survived from the 16th and 17th centuries with St. John's church dating to the 13th century. Passing near to the earthworks of Bolebec Castle we came to Oving where we enjoyed an early lunch on the grass outside the old Black Boy pub (with the odd pint or two, of course). There were lovely views of the distant

Chilterns and then we moved on through more pretty fields to North Marston.

During our walk Liz manoeuvred us skillfully along the right paths and Malcolm gave us schoolmasterly summaries of the historical aspects of where we happened to be. North Marston had been gutted by a great fire in 1705 and the main remaining point of interest was a working well built by the local miracle worker rector, John Thorne, between 1290 and 1314. His fame came from his confining the devil inside a lead boot which was part of the well. As he pumped up the well's handle the little devil slowly appeared



**July Day Walk, clockwise from above. Finding the devil in the boot at North Marston. En route through Whitchurch village. By the cross and windmill in Quainton**



out of his boot. Fortunately he disappeared again! Thus the origin of the Jack-in-the-box.

We approached Quainton Hill, the highest point in the county (187 m); the views were excellent and having regained our breath we moved down toward the pretty village of Quainton where we sat on the monument on the village green for tea.

The last lengthy part of the walk was through many fields and meadows where Liz's map reading skills were so necessary due to a near total lack of any waymarkers. The paths had been barely trodden upon, so there were few hints of where to go. However, Liz led us back to our cars with good humour and we dispersed with many happy memories of a most enjoyable day and a final pub close by for those who wanted it! **Yvonne and Tony**

**SAINT JOAN AT SHAW'S CORNER.**

When planning our evening event earlier in the year, we envisaged a sumptuous picnic on the verdant lawns in the evening sunshine followed by an excellent performance of Shaw's play as the sun slowly set over the Hertfordshire countryside.

The Saturday started well, bright and hot all day until our group of 10 gathered in the late afternoon to set out our picnic. This went as planned with an excellent selection of food and plenty to drink, all topped off with strawberries, meringues and cream and even a drop of bubbly. However, as the first act progressed, so the weather deteriorated culminating, at the interlude, with a violent thunderstorm and torrential rain.

This meant that the audience did not wait to see if the second act would take place as they dashed to the car park for a quick getaway. We assume that the second act was abandoned. In any case it is



**Walking round the new forest**

unlikely that St. Joan could have been burned at the stake since they would have been unable to start a fire in such inclement weather.

So it appears that the Gods decided to rewrite Shaw's play with a happy ending as St. Joan survived to fight another day. I doubt Shaw would be impressed with the rewrite!

**Ray**

**JULY EVENING WALK: FLAMSTEAD AND TROWLEY BOTTOM.** 14 people + Oscar met at Flamstead church on the evening of July 22nd. It turned into a beautiful evening, warm and perfect for walking. The paths were excellent, well trodden and mainly dry, allowing for plenty of chatter. We went through a very rural area, farm lands and



**August Day Walk: Above, On Kimpton playing fields. Below, lunch in a shady spot under the hedge**



**Shaw's Corner: before the rain**

woods. The setting sun on the ripe fields of wheat were eye stopping, attractive banks of rosebay willowherb, a couple of buzzards, a field of foals completed the feeling of a relaxing walk. After going through the attractive village of Trowley Bottom we finished back at the Three Blackbirds for a drink. sitting outside until about 9.30. Thank you Dee for a very pleasant evening. **Janice**

**AUGUST EVENING WALK:**

**SANDRIDGE.** Our party of 17 set off on a balmy summer's evening to walk the boundary of the new Hertswood. We made good time from Sandridge village, walking through the newly opened Langley Wood and up to Pismire Spring, then turning along new footpaths across fields toward Ferrers Lane and Nomansland. Once across the Common we entered a hive of activity on Hammonds Farm where at least three teams of men and



**Flamstead. Left, an unusual theme for a weather vane. Above, a refreshing drink as dusk falls**





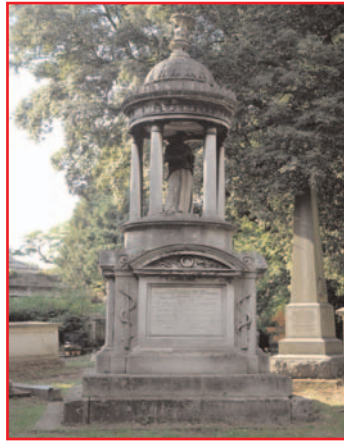
**With the Camera Club we get some interesting subjects. Left, getting ready for the competition. Right, an elaborate tomb in Kensal Rise Cemetery.**

machines were making the most of the light and the good weather to harvest the corn. We marvelled at the speed and efficiency of modern farming techniques as the sun slowly sank on the horizon. We walked back into Sandridge in the last rays of sunshine ready for a welcome drink in a pub garden bedecked with beautiful tubs and hanging baskets. **Pat**

**AUGUST DAY WALK: WHEATHAMPSTEAD.**

A few days before this walk took place, the advertised 7-mile route evolved, to the delight of some present, into a 12-mile one. The circuit, over gently rolling chalk hills, included the villages of both Kimpton and Ayot St Laurence. It was a day when the landscape looked simply stunning in warm summer sunshine.

Angela steered all twelve of us faultlessly, courtesy of some excellent route notes. All the paths were very easy to walk despite all the rain a few days earlier. This meant that we returned to our cars in possibly an



SAR record time of 12 miles in 5 hours, including two refreshment breaks. Zoom-Zoom! (Maybe Angela's small rucksack helps!). **Liz**

**AUGUST WEEKDAY WALK: GRAND UNION CANAL AND KENSAL GREEN CEMETERY.** A group of St. Albans Camera Club members were joined by SAR for the second summer London walk organised by Mike.

Starting from Little Venice the walk went west along the canal bank, stopping to photograph reflections (this was a camera club walk!), admire the guerrilla gardening and local skateboarders.

The cemetery was soon reached. Opened in 1833 this is one of the oldest in London and is still operational. The newest grave seen was 2009 and the oldest dated back to at least 1835. Amongst the famous people buried there are Isambard Kingdom Brunel and Birkbeck, the founder of the London University of that name. In addition to the many interesting graves and mausolea there are excellent views

across London.

Making sure we were not locked in, we headed off to Baker Street and one of the oldest pubs in London, the Globe, for a well earned meal and liquid refreshment. **Mike**

**AUGUST WEEKDAY WALK:**

**WHITWELL.** I for one awoke to the sound of rain against the windows, so my first thought was, of course, "I know that this is Anna's first walk as leader but surely she has realised that we always walk under clear blue skies?" I should have known better: by the time we assembled at St Paul's Walden, fine weather was with us, and off we set: past the imposing gates to the manor of Stagenhoe, and on to a field full of the most massive expanse of red clover any of us have ever seen. (This gave me the opportunity to pontificate about Darwin's proven theory that the amount of red clover on a farm is directly proportional to its number of farm cats – unbelievable, but true). Then it was on to scenic views across to the high rises of beautiful Stevenage, and past a field with a huge host of golden sunflowers, down a shady track with delicious (wild?) plums and in the distance a view down the tree lined avenue to The Bury (childhood home of the QM), And so it was back to a large log at St PW to eat our lunch in brilliant sunshine. By the time I arrived back in St Albans the rain had started again so one up to Anna, not just for organising such a pleasant day for us but also for getting the weather right. Of course, this does set a precedent for the next time she organises an SAR walk in the future! **Bryan**

## Summer BBQ

We laugh when you think summer! The evening was as stormy as any February: even the trusty gazebo was leaking. Fortunately we were an unusually small group so we were able to cluster inside in comfort both for pre-dinner drinks and to enjoy Don's offerings, while he cooked outside with a minimum of shelter.

Bryan, accident-prone as always, managed an injury when Cash, the guard dog, nipped him sharply in an unmentionable place, but the rest of us survived unscathed and departed full and relaxed.

Food was fantastic, as always, and it was great to get together with members old and new in a social setting with plenty of time to catch up on each others' news.

Thanks, as ever, to Don and Meg for their hospitality and planning. **Dee**



**Indoor BBQ sets a new fashion. Photographer Ray gets into the picture thanks to the magic of camera technology**

# Norfolk Coast

After most of us had ploughed our way through downpours and deluges, we arrived on the Friday evening at our very acceptable hostel in Burnham Deepdale to have pre-dinner G&Ts etc, followed by Lesley's excellent lasagne and then strawberries and meringue with lashings of cream. This was promising to be an excellent weekend.

Saturday, and the sandal brigade were ready for the beautiful weather that Deborah had so expertly organised. Our chauffeured limousine (well, the man from Norfolk Green in his new

Then it was time to walk back along the 'spit' - the long, long stretch of sand and shingle along the water's edge, pausing to watch a flock of dunlin as they probed and paddled a few feet in front of us. The windmill at Cley-next-the-Sea rather took our fancy (available for weddings too, if anyone is thinking along those lines). At Stiffkey - where Bryan gave a brief summary of the life, defrocking and untimely death of its vicar (google 'vicar of Stiffkey' if you want to know more) - we returned to the road and the pub with no beer (it having been converted to a private residence) and

Path, which separated the salt marshes inhabited by seabirds from land reclaimed for grazing. Later beside the Burn estuary we had a magnificent view of a windmill with its white top and sails. This heralded the village of Burnham Overy Staithe where we rested for our elevenses near the boathouse and watched the sailing boats busying around the harbour.

We continued around the estuary on a boardwalk over the dunes and along the sandy beach bordering Holkham Bay. Whilst avoiding razor bill shells we observed horse riders, ponies and dog owners, kite flyers, beach cricket players and the occasional male nudist!



We sat in the soft dune sand to consume our lunch. Behind us lay Holkham Meals, a conifer plantation and in front a huge area of rippled sand, which eventually led us to a long line of multi-

**Clockwise from top left. The mill at Cley-next-the-Sea claims to be the most photographed/painted scene in Norfolk. Picnicking in the sand dunes. Seals at Blakeney point. On the beach in Holkham Bay. Elevenses at Burnham Overy Staithe**

bus) arrived spot on time and soon we were afloat and on our way to Blakeney Point. To quote from The Times of that very day, this is home to some 3,000 breeding pairs of sandwich terns, plus a smaller number (but what they lose in quantity, they certainly gain in volume!) of both common and grey seals. Contrary to the terns squealing overhead, the vast majority of the seals seemed to just moodily watch us as we passed by.

back home with the help, for some of us, of our 'concessionary passes' (being 60+ does have its advantages!). And then, refreshed and raring to go again, it was a pleasant evening stroll to the Jolly Sailors for an extremely acceptable meal - so good that no one felt the need for a pudding (an SAR first?).

After a hearty breakfast on Sunday we set out from the hostel along the Pedders Way and the Norfolk Coast

coloured beach huts. Crossing through a huge car and caravan park we reached the south-bound causeway leading to Wells next the Sea. We had fine views of the town and harbour in front, river estuary and salt marshes to our left and a fascinating miniature railway below us on our right.

Finally, we reached Wells with its large sailing craft and busy tourist attractions in time for some of us to catch the 14.38 Coasthopper whilst others rested or explored the town. We all agreed that it was a splendid weekend and we are grateful to Deborah and Lesley for researching and organising it. **Bryan and Chris**

# Constable Country

Ten SAR members attended this delightfully scenic, rural weekend. Our base was the University of Essex single en suite accommodation, conveniently situated on the southern outskirts of Colchester. On Friday evening we enjoyed a traditional pub meal on the quayside at nearby Wivenhoe, afterwards strolling to admire new waterside properties.

On Saturday, the sun was shining, as we set out from East Bergholt, the birthplace of John Constable, where it is possible to see his studio. The house where he spent his childhood has been demolished but a plaque marks its site along the main street.

The parish church of St Mary is a gem, with an unusual feature. The bells were housed in an ancient timber shed in the grounds of the church as a temporary measure in the 16th century, and have remained there ever since!

Joining the Essex Way, we proceeded along Dedham Vale and across the Stour River to the unspoilt village of Dedham, mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086, and a major cloth town in the 14th century. Constable attended school here.

Continuing along the Essex Way, almost every rural scene of peaceful woods, fields and grazing cattle looked like a Constable painting. We strolled along the riverbanks towards Maningtree on the estuary, where we enjoyed a packed lunch by the beach.

Crossing the Stour Bridge and continuing inland, we arrived at the famous Flatford Mill and Bridge Cottage to admire the familiar scenes of Constable paintings, including the Hay Wain, and Boat-building near Flatford Mill. It is clear why he was inspired to paint such rural, peaceful splendour. What a glorious spot!

Feeling refreshed, we walked on back to the cars to return to our excellent accommodation for a quick rest, before catching the university bus into Colchester for an evening meal at a lovely bistro called The Lemon Tree. Good choice! So good we nearly missed the bus home! A perfect end to a wonderful first day.

After packing up on Sunday morning we left at nine for the Chappel and

Wakes Colne Railway Station, a line that survived Beeching.

We set off through rolling Essex farmland and as we walked the sun broke through the cloud to reveal a really lovely day. We arrived at the almost unfortunately named 'Crepping Hall' with its impressive garden full of beautifully mature oaks. Carrying on to Fordham we had elevenses against a grassy bank in the churchyard there; this aggravated the pub dog who thought it his duty to send us on our way and made valiant attempts to get at us through the fence. Crossing the lane through the village we entered an area of new trees planted by the Woodland Trust. Apparently this is the

Walking on through fields mostly filled with sheep a sign on a bridge over a small tributary advised us to 'beware the bull'. We advanced with caution but fortunately no bovine creature came to see us off!!

Outside the village of Ford Street we paused beside a particularly lovely meander in the river set with tables on the grassy bank. There we noted a garden centre backing onto the river. Where there are garden centres there are often ice creams! Even though we hadn't long had lunch several of us couldn't resist the temptation. The Colne here was deep and golden in the sunshine, full of fish and a real treat to sit beside.



**Clockwise from top left. The site of The Hay Wain. Following the yellow corn road. On the bridge over the Stour. Outside The Lemon Tree**

largest new woodland planting in the country. We took paths that wandered amongst acres of baby trees that will surely grow into a marvellous forest.

We paused again at St Mary's church outside West Bergholt and admired the gorgeous Georgian hall there. Everywhere were fields of corn appearing to be ripe but we saw no signs of any harvesting.

Then as we turned westwards again we reached the River Colne, slow moving in the hot sunshine full of reeds and water weeds, an idyllic summer sight. We found a huge oak casting shade, much needed as the day had turned so warm, and stopped for lunch.

Walking on along the flood plain through pastureland we passed willows glinting silver in the breeze. Apparently the area is a Cricket Bat Willow plantation and many new trees had been planted in serried ranks.

As we neared the end of our walk we passed under the Cappel Viaduct and, hot and tired as we were, we paused to admire this impressive structure. It has 32 arches and towers 80 feet above the river. Built between 1847 and 1849 it apparently contains 4.5 million bricks, one can but wonder at the lives of the men who built it.

And so, home after a really lovely weekend. Thanks to Carol and Julian.

**Diane and Deborah**