

Longer Walks (October 2016 to September 2017)

Here is a record of our longer walks in iU3A's fourth year. There's a link to the detail of each walk at the end of each section. For more recent walks, go to our web page [here](#)

October



Goring — this was a strenuous but rewarding walk of just over 10mils in the Thames Valley, much of it on higher ground which offered some good views. It undulated through Berkshire woodland and countryside, passing one or two small villages and one or two hundred pheasants. Lunch was a great experience at The Bell — a very small traditional village pub — voted one of the best 10 walker's pubs in the UK apparently. Some of the climbs in the afternoon started to create a few huffs and puffs and the leader's warning of "a steep hill to climb towards the end" proved accurate! Some still had enough energy left to make a dash down the other side to try for an earlier train [Details](#)

Saunderton, (Chilterns) — this was a lovely 10 mile circular walk in the Chiltern Hills enhanced by the autumnal leaves starting to change colour, and enjoyed by a small select band of five. The few steepish climbs along the way were well rewarded with far reaching views across the countryside, and of course, the sight of magnificent Red Kites which dominate the skies here. Man made highlights included the imposing red brick manors of Bradenham & Hughenden, and later, the prominent local hill top landmark of the Dashwood Mausoleum which sits above the Folly entrance to the Hellfire Caves. After this last steep climb it was a level easy two mile walk back to the station. [Details](#)



North Downs Way — After a difficult tube journey we were left with only five people. A beautiful day with lots of interesting sites to look at on the way. A fort, a stone pavilion, a plane crash site to name but a few. The walk went through lots of woodland and had beautiful views over the north downs all the way along the ridge. A National Trust cafe towards the end was very welcome for a well earned cup of tea. In spite of the Southern Rail go slow we had no problem with the trains. [Details](#).

Bexley to Petts Wood — a relatively straightforward, undemanding and for the most part very picturesque walk on a 9-mile section of the LOOP. We first followed the River Cray (with its splendid five arch bridge) and then passed through landscaped gardens and some deeply wooded areas with a huge variety of different trees and some vibrant autumn colours. This included the well-preserved National Trust area of Petts Wood. We passed up the opportunity of a very early lunch in a restored grand house (Sidcup Place) in favour of the more prosaic attractions of a Wetherspoons pub much nearer the end of the walk. The absence of tube lines in this part of south London was brought home to us when - just before this - we found ourselves crossing three separate footbridges over a total of 14 tracks within less than half a mile. [Details](#).



November



Henley — the most obvious word to describe this walk is 'wet'. It rained continuously from when we stepped off the train in Henley for the 9 miles and 4½ hours. But once we accepted there wouldn't be the warmth and sunshine we've become accustomed to on most walks, it proved a scenic and varied walk. We took in the Henley Regatta stretch of the Thames Path (where a fisherman had just landed an impressively large pike), the picturesque village of Hambleden and the autumn colours of predominantly beech woods during the afternoon. The weather improved and we dried off with a well-earned pot of tea in Henley before catching the return train. [Details](#).

Hatfield Peverel to Chelmsford — a very pleasant 10mile walk along part of the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation. Initially following the small, meandering River Can from Hatfield Peverel, we soon branched onto the banks of the larger River Chelmer. From here it was a largely tranquil walk into Chelmsford, apart from a stretch within close earshot of the busy A12! There are several locks and mill houses en route, and there was still plenty of autumn colour, enhanced by the tree reflections in the still water. An early cafe lunch was taken at the picturesque Paper Mill Lock. In spite of the forecast and one or two spit spots of rain, we enjoyed some good walking weather for the time of year. [Details](#).



Brentford, 9 miles — starting at Brentford station, we walked to the Butts, an attractive 'square' of 17th/18th century houses. After crossing Brentford High Street, we reached the canal side by Brentford dock, where the Grand Union Canal meets the Thames. This was also once the lowest fording place of the Thames, and is reputedly where Caesar crossed the Thames in 54BC. After lunch we walked through Norwood Green and back to the canal, passing many Brunel features for the canal or the Great Western Railway. Then to Hanwell Station and a train to Paddington. The weather was fine, the sun shone, and the colours on the trees were stunning. [Details](#).

Rickmansworth to Uxbridge — it was back in October 2014 when we last did this walk. It was an easy 9 miles along the Colne Valley walking alongside the Grand Union Canal. For lunch we left the canalside to climb up to the Old Orchard to give grand views all down the valley. An excellent gastro pub (never go to the nearby Coy Corp again!) — the service was quick and the range of ales was also excellent. Difficult to drag ourselves away to complete the walk. But we were blessed with some afternoon sun to shine through the dappled leaves. Fran's tea cafe was shut, so the group of 13 pressed on finishing nearly an hour ahead of schedule. [Details.](#)



Wandle Trail — clear skies and sunshine all day for this fascinating walk from the sources of the river Wandle (Waddon Ponds and Carshalton Ponds) to Wandsworth, where it flows into the Thames. Along the way we passed through 14 different parks or nature reserves and a continually changing riverside landscape, ranging from wild vegetation, through old industrial to some more modern developments. People were able to call it a day at different points from just after lunch (at the National Trust café in Morden Hall Park). The 6 (of 13 starters) who made it to Wandsworth clocked over 14 miles according to Isabel's app! [Details.](#)



December



Dollis Brook Greenway & our Christmas Social - another great event. On the day 23 came on the walk and another 6 met us at the pub at the end. This 6 mile stroll from W. Finchley to Hampstead was just right to get us in the mood for the pub. Several were brave enough to wear some form of festive attire for the walk. Giving some strange looks as our snake weaved its way through N. London. It also took us passed some interesting landmarks including Hampstead Garden Suburb and the imposing Central Square bounded by 2 Lutyens churches and the Henrietta Barnett school. From there we entered Hampstead Heath Extension. We exited at N. End to cross to W. Heath and into Hill Gardens with its lovely 800m long pergola. After passing Jack Straw's castle we were at Hampstead and returned to Highbury for our pub lunch. [Details.](#)

January 2017

Petts Wood to Hayes — our first walk of 2017, another section of the LOOP. We potentially were going to have our highest turnout for a while (15), but as the date approached colds and flu took their toll. Then in the last 24 hours with the forecast predicting heavy rain and snow, we lost a few more. On the day 7 hardy walkers set off - including a brave new member! It was typical LOOP - some connecting bits through urban streets but good stretches of woodland and country parks. With the small number of us and the weather, a brisk pace meant we arrived early for lunch at picturesque Farnborough village. In the afternoon we passed Holwood House (home of William Pitt the Younger) and at the 'Wilberforce Oak' briefly paused to enjoy the views. The challenge of finishing the walk before the snow started, worked. We finished more than an hour ahead of plan. [Details.](#)





Totteridge — almost perfect winter walking weather (in stark contrast to the previous week). Crisp and sunny, with just about enough frost to keep the ground fairly firm under foot. The walk took a surprisingly green route along and around the ridge that forms part of the green belt within the Greater London's northern boundary. We took in most parts of the salubrious Totteridge area, the fringes of Mill Hill, Monken Hadley and High Barnet, mainly through woodland, fields and meadows and with good views back towards London from the higher ground. The group split evenly between the pub and the café at lunchtime — those who went to the pub seemed particularly pleased with the disposable overshoe covers that were handed round. Regular public transport links made this a good walk for people to decide when to drop out and the leader achieved his objective of reducing the initial 14 by half before reaching High Barnet station. The one debutant commendably managed the full distance of about 11 miles. [Details](#).

Rotherhithe to Wapping — another brisk walk was required to try to keep us warm on another cold January day. We started from Rotherhithe then weaved our way around all the historic old dock areas on this peninsular. We walked through the filled-in vast Russia Docks, then Greenland Docks and Surrey Docks ending back at the famous Mayflower pub for lunch. Then after lunch, bracing ourselves again for the cold, struck out along the Thames Path to cross the river at Tower Bridge. From there it was through St Catherine Dock, Tobacco Dock and Shadwell Basin to end this interesting 8.5 miles at Wapping. [Details](#).



February



Richmond to Putney — a walk from Richmond across park, common and heath to Putney. Some interesting landmarks were the site of an Iron Age fort, Caesar's hidden camp, the 'keyhole' view of St Pauls from King Henry's Mound, the remains of the men's accommodation from the 1948 Olympic village and Manor Fields, an extensive 1930's estate in 'Arts and Crafts' style. Early signs of spring cheered us on — snowdrops, witch hazel sprouting and a pink camellia bush in flower. We saw a herd of young deer at close quarters, trying out their antlers. The weather was mild and there was enough mud to make us feel that we were out of the city. Walk

members variously described the day as exhilarating, windswept, lots of chat, full of surprises, a record holder for the number of toilets in the first hour (three!), tasty cake (lunch at Windmill tea rooms), and 'crossing a golf course — not many dead'. Our patient leader Stuart initially described us as lively, amending this to uncontrollable after lunch despite three of the original 14 walkers having left! [Details](#).

Woldingham to Oxted — a cold and overcast day, but rain and sleet just about held off for this ten-mile varied walk in the North Downs area of Surrey. It's only five minutes by train between the two stations, but we managed to stretch it to over six hours on foot. This included well over an hour sampling the delights of the Green Rooms café in Godstone, where some people just couldn't resist cake on top of a main course. We welcomed two new members (Rob and Eamon). The latter proved so popular that people asked if he could come along in future even if Rob wasn't able to! The walk included a stretch on the North Downs Way, plenty of woodland and fields, wildlife around several ponds and a couple of impressive village churchyards. In the second of these (St Peter's, Tandridge) we marvelled at one of the largest Yew trees in the country, with a

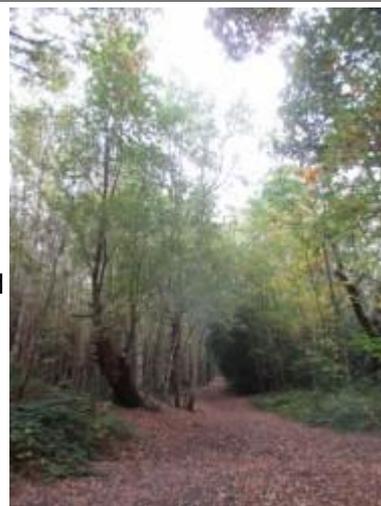


girth of 11 metres and reputed to be over 1,000 years old. [Details](#).



Hampton Court Circular — good weather was with us for most of the walk, the rain staying off until almost the end and then finally clearing to leave a fine rainbow. Lots of wildlife to be seen in the parks (well it was half term) and many fine pairs of antlers on display from the resident deer herds. This is a lovely varied walk with lots of water features, spring bulbs in abundance, and a great cafe for lunch. It was a slightly less than nine mile walk as the formal gardens of the palace, formerly free to enter during the winter months, this year have been closed to the public. So no chance to view the magnificent 250 year old great vine. [Details](#).

Hayes to Croydon — this was the next section of the LOOP. A strenuous up and down ten miles but all ten of us made it to the end. Shortcuts and barbed wire fences added to the adventure of this walk! A quick lunch service allowed us to catch up some lost time. This well-wooded section is probably one of the better sections of the LOOP with some splendid views back northward toward the city with Crystal Palace, the Shard and Canary Wharf, all visible. 95% in woods or countryside — an unusually high percentage for a LOOP section. The route also passed through commons, gardens and nature reserves. [Details](#).



Erith to Woolwich — another quite wintry day for this excursion south of the river to negotiate three sections of the Green Chain in south east London. The forecast rain duly arrived by mid-morning, but proved much less throughout the day than we feared. The morning was mainly through a variety of woods, where our eagle-eyed photographer spotted an unusual tree carving. The afternoon featured more parkland, including the impressive Jacobean house in Charlton Park. Lunch at the Green Man was welcoming, not expensive by today's standards and gave us a chance to dry out. All but one of the group of eight made it to the Thames Barrier, despite numerous opportunities to drop out using local buses. [Details](#).

March

Reading to Henley — 14 of us enjoyed this pleasant nine mile section of the Thames Path passing through the pretty villages of Sonning (where we had to have a visit to Theresa May's church) and then Shiplake for lunch. There were still snowdrops and crocuses, but there were also the first signs of spring with budding blackthorn and cherry blossom visible. The proper linen napkins met with approval for our lunch stop. Lunch being at the seven-mile mark meant the afternoon section was easily accomplished by all allowing time for a museum visit or a chocolate cafe stop at the end in Henley. [Details](#).





Ponders End to East India Docks — a repeat of this March 2015 walk. A straightforward north to south walk right down the River Lea. Firm canal paths made sure we had no mud. Apart from the industrial patches (past and present) we walked passed open countryside, bird reserves, Olympic Park and other intriguing sites. While more of the Leamouth path has been completed since 2015, it still ended at Cody Docks forcing us to take some back streets before we re-joined the path at the Ecological Park that led us to East India Dock. Most were keen to add the extra detour to Leamouth and Trinity Buoy — the attraction of ending with a tea stop! [Details](#).

Croydon to Banstead Downs — this was the next section of the LOOP. A bit of a strenuous 10.5 miles but very attractive crossing several Downs and Ridgeways. It was raining when we set off and the forecast said heavy rain all day. However we set off with heads down. We traversed some ridgeways, passed historic aerodromes with RAF memorabilia scattered in the brambles. The pub was a welcome sight and a chance to warm up and dry out. Then we were rewarded by dry weather all afternoon. With clouds breaking up from the tops of the ridges we could see glorious views of south London and the City skyscrapers. Unfortunately the end was marred by a wasted mad dash to the station just to miss one train and then Southern cancelling the next. [Details](#).



Wadhurst — this was a 10.5 mile circular walk in the Weald in Kent, undulating but nothing very steep. On this glorious day (hottest day in the year so far) the route initially followed the Sussex Border Path to an early pub lunch in Cousley Wood. Phoning ahead with our order made for a very speedy service. We had some added entertainment with limbo dancing to get under the tables! After lunch we descended past several outhouses to Bewl Water reservoir before completing the circle back to the village of Wadhurst — in time for tea and cakes. [Details](#).

April

Chartridge Hills and Vales — this was perfect walking weather for eleven of us to tackle the Chiltern Hills & Vales, and to enjoy the blossoms and flowers of spring as well as the many glorious far-reaching countryside views. We were serenaded all day with a varied chorus of birdsong, while the ubiquitous red kites cruised overhead. A rope swing at the medieval earthworks provided a fun interlude for some (click [HERE](#))! A very welcome lunch was had at the Bell at Chartridge which set us up for just a few more hills on the afternoon leg. [Details](#).



Sunningdale to Windsor — this was a good walk at this time of year because of the abundance of spring flowers. We covered a distance of 10 miles much of it through Windsor Great Park. From the village of Sunningdale, we passed through Coworth Park (with its polo playing fields), via Virginia Water lakes and Valley Gardens to Savill Gardens (reputedly Britain's finest ornamental garden), where we stopped for lunch. After lunch we went through the deer park, finishing by following the aptly named Long Walk into Windsor, with the distant castle getting ever closer — although as the photo shows we finally made it to the (locked) gates. [Details](#).

Banstead to Kingston — a bit of quick re-planning was necessary as Southern Rail kept us away from a start from Banstead. So instead we started from East Cheam but after only a mile or so we re-joined the LOOP. This was an 11 mile section as we turned North now on our clockwise rotation of the LOOP. The first Interesting Fact was about the parklands of King Henry VIII's Nonsuch Palace. After that it was Bourne Park where we picked up the source of the Hogsmill River and followed it as it twisted and turned on its route to join the Thames at Kingston. The main talking point of lunch was — sandwiches with roast potatoes, Yorkshire pudding & a pint of gravy — definitely a first! After lunch we left the river for a bit but were soon back following its course past the site of many gunpowder mills. As the Hogsmill picked up strength and volume suddenly we were there, at Kingston-on-Thames. Tea by the bigger river beckoned for some to enjoy the spring sun.



[Details.](#)



Hertfordshire Chain Trail — perfect walking weather of breezy sunshine for nine of us on an eleven mile circular from Bayford station in Herts. Much of the route was through glorious oak and hornbeam ancient woodland, deemed ancient as it had been continuously wooded since 1600 AD, but with evidence of cultivation in the area since the late Bronze Age (1000 BC). Helpful Woodland Trust workers who we met en route explained the scarcity of wild flowers in these woods as both the voracious appetites of numerous Muntjac deer (none of which we saw) and the relatively dense canopy of hornbeams, which leaves the woodland floor too shaded for wild flowers. Our group

photo shows a coal-tax post by our path, with the red cross representing part of the shield of the City of London. Coal imported into the City of London had been taxed since mediaeval times. New marker posts were erected in 1861 to show the revised boundary within which the tax was payable, but mostly duties were not actually collected on the boundary. The money raised from the tax was spent on infrastructure developments in London. The tax was abolished by the LCC in 1889. [Details.](#)

May

Sevenoaks — A mixed bag of weather followed us on this lovely circular walk from Sevenoaks, through the medieval deer park of Knole House (so large, there's a different room for every day of the year apparently!), via quiet country lanes, a village green with pond and duck house, past typical Kentish oast houses and hop pickers' cottages, to lunch at the NT tea room at the moated medieval house of Ightham Mote. The return was largely on the Greensand Way along a ridge with views across the Weald. Bluebells were still much in evidence everywhere... this must be one of the best bluebell walks in the country. We ended with afternoon tea and cake at the magnificent Knole House. Two NT tea rooms in one day can't be bad! [Details.](#)



Watton-at-Stone to Welwyn — After a long night of heavy rain, five walkers risked further bad weather, setting off from Watton-at-Stone in Hertfordshire. After half an hour the rain returned, and pleasure in muddy fields and dripping woods began to fade. By the lunchtime stop five miles in, at a welcoming pub in Tewin, everyone was thoroughly soaked. The weather prospects for the afternoon were similarly gloomy so the walk was curtailed and a minicab driver persuaded to ignore the dirty wet boots and drive to Welwyn North station for an earlier train home. [Details.](#)

Kingston-on-Thames round to Hatton Cross - this walk was the next section of the LOOP. The best bit was probably the beginning section through the wide open spaces of Bushy Park. On this warm day we saw deer roaming free and cooling themselves in the ponds and shady areas. We then entered the pretty Woodland Gardens — unfortunately the bluebells had gone and the

rhododendrons were past their best but there were splashes of colour everywhere. This being the LOOP we had a mixture of parks (Hampton Wick, Bushy, Fulwell, Crane and Hounslow Heath) but also some urban trugges. Unfortunately one section toward the end along the Crane River was closed meaning a longer diversion by the roadside meaning Hatton Cross was an even happier sight. [Details](#).



Merstham to Tattenham Corner — a relatively straightforward 10-mile walk, first along a stretch of the North Downs Way with good views to the south, then turning northwards across Banstead, Walton and Epsom Downs. A group of 13, but nothing unlucky about the walking conditions. Although we couldn't entirely escape the distant rumble of the M25, the overwhelming impression was of green surroundings, with a mixture of varied woodland and more open heaths. A well above average pub lunch and, after crossing Epsom racecourse as it geared up for the Derby, half the group also rustled up tea and teacakes at an obliging café near the station.

Welcome to one new group member — Poppy (not Polly!) [Details](#).

June

Chess Valley — By and large a good day weather wise with just the occasional short cloudburst to be dodged! This is a lovely varied walk including woodland paths, ridge walking with great countryside views, riverside meadows, and a couple of imposing country — and all within the Freedom Pass area. Lunch was at the Cock at Sarratt where we enjoyed very good food while basking in warm sunshine in their attractive garden. [Details](#).



Walk to the Borough — this was our Islington Giving charity walk. 32 took part — either for the whole 11.5 miles or for just some of it. This walk was open to all iU3A members so we had a mixture from the Longer Walks, Shorter Walks groups and others. Another warm day but we got some good tree cover as we meandered down the Dollis Brook Greenway, into Hampstead Garden Suburb, then Highgate Woods, Queens Wood then the Parkland Walk to end at Finsbury Park. A very pleasant walk — and we raised over £410!

Seven Sisters (South Downs) — despite an unpromising weather forecast, we stayed mainly dry during the morning (over Seaford Head to Cuckmere Haven) and afternoon (walking along the cliffs of the Seven Sisters). However, we then got drenched on the final stretch over Beachy Head and into Eastbourne. Nevertheless spirits remained high among the group of 11 (including 7 men — an unusually high proportion) and we all completed the full 14 miles of this dramatic walk with consistently impressive views. Three people were spotted breaching the group's rules by using umbrellas to combat the heavy rain — and this transgression will trigger an automatic two-walk suspension. [Details](#).



July



Broxbourne Woods — this walk started (and finished) from Bayford Station on the Moorgate to Hertford line (so very easy to get to). We took the 'safe' way along the road to get from the station to the start point of the walk. We were soon into the woods. Which was just as well with the temperature being in the high twenties. We journeyed east toward the Lea Valley and then joined Ermine Street. We turned south on it — the Way being metalled but unused these days as a road. While originally planned to be over 11 miles the whole group took the opt-out option, considering the high temperature, to shorten the walk to just over 8 miles. The walk took us straight to the pub gardens for our lunch — and we managed to find some shade there also. The afternoon section took us through open meadows — the butterfly life was wonderful — then back into the woods. By shortening the walk we had time to nip into a second pub near the end. The landlady seemed surprised when we didn't want drinks (we all wanted ice cream) but did oblige us regardless.

From there we took the riskier shortcut through the back lane, passing the Motor Industry's centre, to the station. A very pleasant walk in glorious rolling countryside. [Details.](#)

Sudbury, Suffolk — good walking weather and gently rolling terrain made this an easy day's walk in the pretty Suffolk/Essex countryside, the River Stour marking the boundary between the two counties, and providing some pleasing backwaters and water meadows. Away from the riverside the crop fields provided intense splashes of colour of golden wheat and blue comfrey. The lunchtime pub coped admirably with 14 hungry diners arriving unexpectedly en masse... must have been the landlord's many years of experience managing pubs in Islington! [Details.](#)



Ashurst and Pooh country — an inauspicious start to this expedition when the designated train was cancelled, which entailed an hour's delay. We improvised by stopping for coffee in Oxted, buying a sandwich and scrapping the planned pub lunch stop. When we finally started walking at noon, it was a peaceful and varied route taking in wheat fields, river valley, woodland and a picturesque village. The highlights were crossing Pooh Bridge, where the more juvenile group members (i.e. all of us) paused for a game of pooh sticks; Piglets Cream Tea at the nearby themed café; and arriving back at the station just in time for a train that hadn't been cancelled. [Details.](#)

Folkestone to Dover — We had a leisurely start catching the 10.37 from St Pancras. Under an hour later we began walking through Folkestone, noting the memorials to William Harvey (discoverer of the circulation of the blood 400 years ago), Charles Dickens's Little Dorrit (written there), and an arch where millions of soldiers embarked to the First World War trenches, many never to return. It was a dry walk with brilliant views of the sea and the French coast; initially from the shore in the sunny morning and then from the dramatic clifftops over lunch, at the amazingly positioned Clifftop Café, and in the cloudy afternoon. Lunch was particularly welcome for the food and the rest as it was preceded by a hard zigzag climb from shore to 500 foot clifftop on what was otherwise a moderate walk. We encountered a Martello Tower then lots of World War defences and batteries along the Clifftop. Plus Shakespeare Cliff of King Lear Fame, with the relevant quote ably remembered by Stuart near the spot. On the final descent to Dover Station we walked past an incredibly impressive Napoleonic era defensive fortification, just in time to catch the 4.50 train enabling us to be back in Islington just after 6. Not bad for a 10 mile walk at least 60 miles from there! [Details.](#)



August



Guildford to Westhumble — Occasional drizzle in the morning followed by a clearer, sunnier afternoon with a bit of a tailwind to help us on our way. We alternated between the North Downs Way and the Pilgrims' Way, which meant a few climbs and descents to exercise the muscles and lungs. Whether because of the improved weather, the hearty lunch in the pretty village of Shere, the promise of more splendid views to the south from the ridge, or just peer group pressure, seven of the ten starters opted to do the full 14 mile walk (including at least two who hadn't planned to). It became almost 15 miles after we detoured to Denbies Vineyard for a welcome pot of tea [Details](#).

Oxford Waterways Walk — A 10 mile walk with 13 participants. Weather wonderfully sunny! Flat walking near to rivers and canal. Lovely break points at pubs for coffee (The Trout) and lunch (The Anchor) with good food selection, ending with afternoon tea in Oxford Modern Art Gallery cafe, which is a transformed brewery. Points of note included: Medieval remains of a dissolved monastery included; Herd of cows wading in the river Thames, reminding one of an African landscape; Oxford Colleges with meeting places of the Inklings (famous authors of Oxford, CS Lewis, JRR Tolkien). A great day out — very relaxed with exit points easily accessed by walkers who needed to return earlier to London.



[Details](#).



Newport to Audley End — A lovely 9 mile walk with weather to match — apart from one or two post-prandial rainspots that is! It was a lucky day for those who enjoy church visiting as we managed to visit three en route — lucky, as it's increasingly rare to find them unlocked these days. We discovered a new use for a redundant red phone box ... community book exchange! Some reverted to childhood with a bit of apple-scrumping along the way. A very good lunch was had at the pretty thatched pub in Arkesden, the Axe & Compasses. [Details](#)

Stanford-le-Hope to Pitsea — This was another part of the Thames Estuary Path. We've previously done the section from Stanford-le-Hope going west to Tilbury. This time we started at Stanford but went east to Pitsea. It was flat estuary walking with big open skies. We had lunch in the pub in Fobbing village — where the Peasant's Revolt started back in 1381. The route took us through two RSPB/ WWT Reserves and we skirted the Wat Tyler Country Park. We nearly were thwarted in our route — encountering cows being moved off one Reserve on to another, blocking our path. But the farmer managed to escort us through the herd — with a bit of intrepidation!

[Details](#).



September



Epping South — Although never far from the urban, Epping Forest still manages to feel rural with its variety of terrain from open country, dense ancient woodland, coppiced areas, lakes and ponds. Lunch at the Butlers Retreat café was followed by a visit to the wonderful Tudor QE Hunting Lodge (1543), and then to the adjacent visitor centre, for some to stock up on venison from the annual forest deer cull. The short afternoon walk hadn't previously been reced by the leader (Saturday Walkers Club walk notes are so comprehensive!) but a detour to picturesque Connaught Water left us 'off piste' and having to jettison SWC notes! Thanks to compass, OS and iPhone map

technology we managed to navigate our way on to Loughton only some 20 mins or so behind schedule. And the weather was perfect! [Details.](#)

Donkey Wood to Uxbridge Lock — This walk was the last section for us as a Group to complete the 150 miles of the LOOP! For those not put off by the weather forecast, six of us picked up where we left off from the last section — at Hatton Cross. This start point, directly under the Heathrow flight path, meant limited conversation as we weaved our way, initially through back streets. We were basically following the River Crane and picking up some parks on route — the largest being Stockley Park. The showers in the morning did mean we were glad of finding a café in Hayes to allow us to dry out and enjoy a fry-up. But the afternoon saw improvement in the weather and the route. We joined the Grand Union Canal and headed toward Birmingham branching off on the Uxbridge Loop. By the end the sun shone and rewarded us with dappled views along the canalside (with the odd detour for bank repairs). [Details.](#)



Wakes Colne to Bures — Eight of us enjoyed a pleasant semi-circular walk on the Essex-Suffolk borders between a couple of little-known stations that somehow avoided the Beeching treatment. The first houses the East Anglian Railway Museum, although that didn't delay us long as no-one in the group owned up to being a train spotter. Highlights were the longest viaduct in East Anglia, a couple of impressive churches, the restored crenelated chimneys at Colne Priory and seeing a full rainbow while managing to escape all but a few drops of rain. No-one seemed desperate enough to sample the portaloos thoughtfully provided midway along the afternoon stretch. [Details.](#)

Isle of Wight — this was our extended walk for 2017 — we had 3 nights (2½ days walking) in a very comfortable hf Holidays centre at Freshwater Bay. 15 of us were signed up this year for this excursion. It had a real holiday feel right from the beginning with a train journey then ferry crossing, just to get on the island. It was a great location and the centre provided a range of defined walks to chose from. The group chose two "Full On" walks (11½ and 13 miles). Unfortunately for the first full day the weather was a bit wet but only light showers. The second day was truely glorious with great views all over the island.



Oxted to Lingfield — this was an 11 mile walk in the Kent Weald, passing through woodland, farmland and two nature reserves, with some good views — only limited by the murky weather. The walk went south from Oxted via Limpsfield Common and Pains Hill towards Staffhurst Wood, a Local Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest managed by the Surrey Wildlife Trust. The pub was very swish but still offered a good range of simple lunchtime food. The afternoon section was mostly across low-lying farmland, but with several low hills offering good views. It crossed the River Eden and passed the small settlement of Crowhurst and the well-preserved manor house of Crowhurst Place. Some stopped for tea at the end, others dashed off for the train.

[Details.](#)