



## Longer Walks (October 2017 to September 2018)

Here is a record of our longer walks in iU3A's fifth 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 2017



**Thames Barrier to London Bridge** — from Pontoon Dock DLR station seven of us took a brief detour to look at the Thames Barrier, headed to the Emirates Air Line cable car to cross the Thames, then we joined the Thames Path and followed it westwards through Greenwich and Rotherhithe towards London Bridge. We had a wonderful sunny day, so the cable car ride gave us brilliant views of the building site that is London as it moves east — a forest of multi-coloured cranes. The Thames Path took us close up to smart new apartment and office blocks as well as derelict docks and a series of modern sculptures. History was present in the bronze statue of Tsar Peter the Great at

Deptford (1698), Pepys Park (1742) and the place in Rotherhithe where the Mayflower ship was fitted out for the Pilgrim Fathers' transatlantic voyage. We had lunch at the lovely old Cutty Sark pub and passed Surrey Docks City Farm with its bronze animal sculptures (as well as live ones) on the way to Tower Bridge, where our previous peace was suddenly jolted by crowds of tourists. [Details.](#)

**Witley to Haslemere** — a generally peaceful and undemanding nine mile walk through a scenic part of Surrey. We visited the picturesque village of Chiddingfold (with the restored Crown Inn) and passed through extensive National Trust land during the afternoon route. Details.





**Stansted Mountfichet** — a rather damp day failed to depress the select seven who turned up for this very nice 11 mile walk. The promised "far-reaching views" were a bit limited by the poor weather we had — rain most of the morning but never that heavy. There was plenty of autumnal tree colour to be seen in spite of the drizzle, and a couple of fine churches were visited en route. We followed quiet country lanes and paths, through woods, fields and small villages. We passed through the hamlets of Hazel End and Farnham and the pretty village of Manuden. After a longish morning walk we enjoyed a timely and leisurely lunch at the Ugley Chequers. It was then a straightforward southerly yomp back, via the village of Ugley Green, to Stansted Mountfichet in perfect time to catch the train home. [Details.](#)

**Tewin, North Welwyn** — 10½ miles. Didn't start well — just outside the village our "path" across the field had been recently ploughed up. Luckily, it being a lovely dry day, the earth was firm so it wasn't too hard-going. The rolling Hertfordshire countryside around is full of hills so we had quite a few downs and ups. The autumnal colours were at their best. After skirting Tewin, one of the oldest villages in the area, with good views back over Welwyn Garden City, we popped in and out of various woods throughout the day, interspersed with open fields, and passed by Lewis Hamilton's ex-house (sold for £11½ million two years ago) and needed a Google stop to figure out who VJM (the current owner) was. Lunch was in the picturesque village of Bramfield at the famous (and smart!) Grandison Arms. They managed to cope with our 16 but were a bit slow, putting us 15 minutes behind schedule, tut tut. After lunch we passed the Marden Hill estate and then reached the Saxon Tewin Church and its interesting graveyard. A figure of eight walk took us back to Welwyn North station. Hope the dash for the train didn't put off our three new members. [Details.](#)

## November



**Audley End to Great Chesterford** — this was an 8 mile continuation of the Newport to Audley End walk of 18th August 2017. Again we were blessed with glorious warm weather. The route took us passed pretty thatched cottages and



interesting churches via paths and quiet country lanes. The group size of 20 beat our previous high of 19 — which was back in January 2015. What was the attraction of this walk - was it the shorter distance, the autumn colours, new members — who knows! Most of the walk was done in the morning so it was a leisurely late lunch, even time for pudding, then only a mile more to the train station. [Details.](#)

**Epping & the Essex Way** — this 10 mile circular walk was the last one of the year in the countryside and we were fortunate to have a lovely late autumn day. Although Epping is usually associated with the forest, this walk was much more in open countryside. We were quickly out to large fields recently ploughed, quite deep ploughing in places, which revealed the variety of soils of the area. Spring grains had already just appeared in some places. Fortunately we did not encounter much in the way of ploughed fields obliterating the footpath! We did of course pass through woodland and were lucky enough to have a good view of a green woodpecker sitting on a fence, unlike the long-tailed tits who were as usual very active flying through the trees in small groups. Lunch was in that endangered species, the "cash only" pub, a real old-



fashioned place with low ceilings and exposed timbers. The Moletrap pub on Tawney Common is very popular in the area with its fresh home cooking. However it did display an all too realistic mole trap on its pub sign which provoked comment amongst our group. One of our party sketched the pub which has really caught the feel of the place. Later we passed some interesting examples of modern environmentally friendly houses which seemed slightly incongruous in traditional countryside. But it being late autumn we were accompanied throughout by a constant backdrop of wonderfully coloured trees in bright sunlight right up to our return to Epping station. [Details.](#)

**Isle of Dogs to Blackheath** — on a clear sunny day the views across the Thames and the autumn colours in Greenwich Park would have been spectacular. However this November day was slightly misty, mild, dry and grey with just a glimpse of blue sky in the afternoon — quite pleasant for walking however! With many things to see we managed to keep up the pace required by the Longer Walks Group, pausing rather than lingering to see across the Thames to the O2 Centre from Cubitt Town Wharf, the Old Naval College from Island Gardens and Burrells Wharf where Brunel's SS Great Eastern was built and launched. We had to imagine brightly coloured smoke billowing from



the chimney of pigment/dye factory and local pigeons in various unusual colours flying around the area. This factory relocated in the 1980s. The buildings of Burrells Square Wharf are listed and it is now a very smart residential estate. In Greenwich we passed Trinity Hospital almshouse, saw a metal strip in the pavement of Feathers Place marking the meridian and, having climbed the only hill of our walk in Greenwich Park, saw Queen Elizabeth's Oak. The Hare and Billet on the edge of Blackheath provided a relaxing venue for lunch and from there, in Eliot Place, we passed the former home of the Polar explorer Sir James Clark Ross after whom Ross Island and Ross Sea are named, before seeing the 18th century Pagoda where

Caroline, the wife of George IVth lived.

Although unable to get into the Old Churchyard of St Margaret's Lee where Edmund Halley the 2nd Astronomer Royal is buried the tower of the medieval church was clearly visible. Blackheath Halls, which claim to be the London's oldest surviving purpose built venue(1895) allowed us a brief look and immediately beyond this we turned into Blackheath Cator Estate which, in addition to the late Georgian and early Victorian houses, showed examples of Span Developments (1957-65). These aimed to 'span the gap between the suburban monotony of the typical 'spec building' and the architecturally designed, individually built residence' and encountered much opposition at the time. In wall of a passageway in Hallgate flats we saw a sculpture by Keith Gordon 'The Architect in Society' which was commissioned to celebrate one of the planning victories. (See photo) Returning to the Heath we passed Colonnade House, a magnificent 1790s crescent of large semi-detached houses linked together by colonnades and the 17th century Morden College, a grand almshouse built in the style of Wren for merchants 'who had fallen on hard times through no fault of their own'. We abandoned the longer alternative return route to the west of Greenwich Park, via the view point on Point Hill, in favour of the direct route past the Royal Observatory. Some walkers took the riverboat from Cutty Sark to Westminster. [Details.](#)



**Brixton to Crystal Palace** — a fine bright but breezy day for this meander through some lovely south London parks, previously unknown to most of us North Londoners! First was Brockwell Park (famous for its lido) packed with interesting features including a beautifully planted walled garden, wildlife lakes, a 'Little Ben' clock tower, cafe in Brockwell Hall, all topped off with great views towards the city. Ruskin Park was smaller, but with more iconic city views and pretty gardens. Next, to Dulwich Park for more lakes, gardens, cafe, but no city views! From here it was a short distance to Sydenham Hill Wood Nature Reserve, such a wonderfully tranquil area of ancient woodland that we could have been in the middle of the countryside. After lunch and a short walk through pretty Sydenham Wells Park, we ended at the wonderful Crystal Palace Park, the largest park visited by us on this walk and the most well known by us. It is packed with historical interest, from recently restored Victorian dinosaurs and sphinxes to one of the biggest mazes in the country. The station is on the overground direct to H&I making for a very easy return journey. [Details](#).

**Pitsea to Leigh-on-Sea** — the nights are drawing in so this was a shorter walk of 7½ miles, but the overnight rain meant it was bit slip & slide. This walk picked up the Thames Estuary Path where we left off to complete the last section. Initially we followed the path through various RSPB Reserves, never far from the Thames. This led us straight into Benfleet for lunch. After that we left the flat Thames Estuary Path and entered Hadleigh Country Park, climbing up to Hadleigh Castle with stunning views over Canvey Island and across the river to the Isle of Grain. As always, perfect timing, we made it to Leigh-on-Sea four minutes before the train arrived! [Details](#).



## December



**. Thames Path & Regent's Canal** — this was our Christmas Season social walk. Although normally for our Christmas walk the emphasis is on the lunch, this year we actually had a reasonable 10 mile walk as well. The length didn't diminish the numbers with 32 talking part (for part of the walk or just the lunch). Not quite the record — we had 33 in 2014! We started from Canning Town immediately going through the new development of Fish Island, then from the East India Docks we followed the Thames Path round to Cubitt Town crossing the Meridian line. There we left the path to cut across the



Isle of Dogs. While this was a city walk we were always near great expanses of water. Either the Thames, the various docks in the Isle of Dogs (debate over coffee: does the name comes from Henry VIII's hunting dogs or 'ducks'?) then the Regent's Canal. While no prizes were awarded this year there was a good sprinkling of festive attire, with Ceilia's santa outfit probably the most fetching. The weather stayed bright all the way and the walk took us right to our end for a late lunch at the Island Queen, Angel. [Details](#).

## January 2018



**Bayford** — our first walk of 2018 was to test our adaptability. This was due to be an 11½ miles circular walk, another two 'links' on the Hertfordshire Chain Walk. The trouble was that as we arrived at H&I station we were greeted with a 'No Trains running....' sign. We decided to meet the rest of the group at Finsbury Park station and decide an alternative plan there. With a faint hope that trains might be running north of Alexandra Park station we decided to walk there via the Parkland Walk, a decent 4½ miles in itself. Our determination was rewarded because just as we arrived at Ally Pally station the first running train arrived. Hence we arrived at Bayford but just a bit later

than planned. Instead of managing the two next links in the chain walk we did just the one. Another decent 5½ miles and the recce knowledge paid off allowing a switch of pub; so we didn't miss out there either. Trains back were a bit infrequent compared to a normal service but we were back in Islington for the planned time having accomplished nearly the original walk distance. Such a resourceful team effort! [Details](#).

**Staines to Hampton Court** — nine of us enjoyed splendid weather for the time of year, with plenty of sunshine. We followed a varied stretch of the Thames Path. Highlights included a detour round the nature reserve at Penton Hook Lock ("surely the most impressive river loop along the whole Thames"), the last area of traditional riverside meadowlands before London near Chertsey Bridge, and a short trip on one of the two remaining small passenger ferries across the river to get from Shepperton on the north bank to continue the walk on the south side. Even the short hailstorm just before reaching Hampton Court had its positive side, in the form of a spectacular full rainbow as the sun re-emerged. The guidebook had the walk as 12+ miles, but it didn't seem that long. [Details](#).



**Kew Gardens to Richmond** — amazingly, for a day of such horrible windy and very wet weather, 11 mostly suitably attired walkers turned up. We're such a hardy bunch! And it was great to welcome some newer walkers to the group too. Luckily the early and extended convivial pub lunch coincided with the worst of the rain, but Richmond really wasn't seen at its best. Not sure who coined the phrase 'there's no such thing as bad weather only inappropriate clothing' but that was certainly tested on this walk.

**Theydon Bois to Epping** — a walk of 11 miles through rolling Essex countryside, quite varied, heading east from Theydon Bois station. The route picked up bits of the Three Forests Way and parts of the Essex Way. Lunch was at the very quaint Moletrap country pub. Then we turned west back toward and finishing at Epping station. [Details](#).



**February**



**Bayford and Hertford** — this was a 10 mile circular walk picking up where we left off on the Hertfordshire Chain Walk. The very cold weather and threat of snow didn't put the 11 members off completing the walk at a brisk pace. We completed part of Link 4 on this long distance trail but also did parts of the Hertfordshire Way and the Lee Valley Way. [Details.](#)

**Parks and Open Spaces of West London** — 10 of us enjoyed a mainly sunny day for this varied walk taking in several parks (including Gunnersbury, shown in the picture), a stretch of the Thames Path alongside Kew Gardens and a section of the Capital Ring from Richmond Lock on the Thames to Osterley Lock on the Grand Union Canal. We had the good fortune to find ready shelter during the one heavy shower. For one participant the walk brought back childhood memories and for most of us it included some familiar, as well as some new, areas. There was an even gender split — but when it came to lunch a clear male majority opted for the pub rather than the café. National Trust teas and a winter garden awaited the nine who completed almost 12 miles to Osterley House. [Details.](#)



**Crews Hill to Totteridge** — a dry day but with plenty of mud, glorious mud, underfoot. Luckily 13 were undeterred by previous dire warnings about just how muddy it was going to be! Most of the day's route followed the London Loop and in the morning passed through the great open spaces of Trent Country Park & Enfield Chase, once Henry VIII's Royal Hunting Forest. A very good lunch was taken at the Cock Inn, Cockfosters. The afternoon took us through Monken Hadley Common to the attractive village of Monken Hadley itself, with its many listed buildings, then via High Barnet to join the Dollis Valley Path to end at Totteridge & Whetstone tube station. [Details.](#)



**Bayford & Trewin** — this was a bitterly cold planned 10½ mile lollipop-shaped walk in Hertfordshire. It ended up more like 12 miles due to a slight detour by the Leader.... Staying with the same theme from recent walks this walk completed



another link in the long distance trail called the Hertfordshire Chain Walk. We started from Bayford (again) up Link 5, round Link 6 and along the Lea Valley Way ending in Hertford. We had snow flurries throughout the day but nothing that slowed us up. [Details.](#)



**Islington and Hackney Parks and Wildlife Reserves** — 12 of us enjoyed a mercifully mud-free and rain-free walk that took in four parks, two wildlife reserves and the New River, all in Islington and Hackney. Starting from Highbury Fields, we walked through Gillespie Park and Finsbury Park, and then followed the New River to Woodberry Down Wetlands, a wonderful wetland area for bird spotting. Then on to nearby Stoke Newington Reservoirs where we enjoyed a good lunch in the extraordinary old industrial architecture of the pumping station, now repurposed as a cafe. The last section of the route took us across Clissold Park and back along New River into Islington. Thanks to Lesley Delacourt for being 'guest leader' for this walk. [Details](#).

## March

**The Olympic Park (and beyond)** — The morning drizzle gradually receded to provide a reasonably pleasant overcast but mainly dry day with occasional glimpses of sunshine. The 10-mile walk took us from the Angel via the Regents Canal and Victoria Park to the Olympic Park. We explored most areas of this before continuing up the Lee Valley to Tottenham Hale. No-one fancied going up or sliding down the Orbit, but we did visit the Velodrome (for refreshments, a loo stop and to watch people cycling rather than to participate). An essentially 'green urban' outing, but one where we managed to avoid all but a tiny bit of road walking at the beginning and end. [Details](#).



**Bexley to Petts Wood** — we last did this eight mile section of the LOOP in October 2015. 14 of us had a glorious day — the first sign of Spring possibly. Some mud of course but not too much, on a pleasant section of the LOOP with good park and woodlands. It was a short walk so an early lunch stop gave us time to take in a reflective moment at Sidcup Palace. [Details](#).

**Hayes to Knockholt** — those who decided to ignore the poor weather forecast were rewarded with a very pleasant day and only the merest spitspot of rain. This is a lovely rural walk all within the freedom pass area, and apart from the variety of terrain from rolling hills and valleys to woodland, lakes, and common land, passes several points of interest including the source of the river Ravensbourne, the Wilberforce Oak, and Down House home to Charles Darwin (unfortunately closed on walk day!). [Details](#).



## April



**Rickmansworth to Uxbridge** — this was an easy nine mile walk down the Colne Valley, last done in November 2016; it was an enjoyable amble on a pleasant spring day with the green shoots at last starting to show, which took the 15 of us along the Grand Union Canal, London LOOP and the Colne Valley Trail. There was bird life along the way as well, including a couple of swooping red kite. It was warm enough to sit outside for our lunch at the Old Orchard with great views down over the Colne Valley. We even had time for tea at Fran's — great cake! [Details](#).

**Sevenoaks Circular** — This was a delightful springtime walk through the rural Kent countryside, and was made even better by being on the sunniest, warmest day of the year so far. Spring flowers were in abundance everywhere along the route, from the old deer park of Knole House through the paths and bridleways to lunch at the mediaeval moated Manor House of Ightham Mote. We looped back via the well marked Greensand Way, with great views across the Weald of Kent, to afternoon tea and cake on a suntrap terrace at Knole House. Bliss! [Details](#).



**Whyteleafe to Hayes** — A very enjoyable countryside walk for 13 of us, which felt far further away than it was from central London. We saw a profusion of bluebells, daffodils and a wide variety of spring blossoms in woods, fields and hedgerows, mostly in very peaceful surroundings. We stopped midway for lunch in a quirky 16th century pub, although a lengthy wait for food risked detracting from the character of the venue. However, when they did arrive, the portions were more than sufficient to sustain us through the afternoon, which was further enhanced by the absence of all but a few drops of the threatened rain. [Details](#).

## May

**Around Lewes** — this was a glorious 11 mile walk last done by us in May 2015. It started badly — with the group on the train & the Walk Leader still trying to buy a ticket! Oh dear. The group enjoyed an unscheduled coffee at Lewes station while the Leader and two others made frantic attempts — by two trains and a taxi — to catch up with the rest of the group. So it was a 40 minute delayed start that saw us head out of Lewes along the South Downs. It was perfect weather and we jaunted up the hill to enjoy the views with only a slight haze. Once up it was a simple stroll along then down to Rodmell for lunch. Back on schedule we passed Monk's House as we picked up the river Ouse which meandered back to Lewes. We even had time for tea & the early blunder was (almost) forgotten. [Details](#).





**Nymans Gardens:** Only a modest turnout (seven in total — of whom two were in training for an 18 mile-a-day pilgrimage) on this mostly quiet and scenic circular walk from Balcombe on the Brighton line. Excellent spring walking weather and plenty of plant and birdlife to stimulate the senses. Most of us took the opportunity to spend time in the National Trust's renowned Nymans Gardens at lunchtime, where the hydrangea in particular provided a spectacularly colourful vista. This walk was originally checked out for March — thankfully, two months later, the mud was much less prominent, though still very evident in a few of the wooded areas. [Details.](#)

**Walmer to Dover:** We enjoyed a breezy and sunny May walk from Walmer to the end of the rolling Kent Downs, and lunch at picturesque St Margaret's Bay, in a pub right by the shore, followed by a bracing stretch along the dramatic White Cliffs coastal path, finishing with a long descent into Dover, overlooking the impressive and enormous Dover Harbour. [Details.](#)



**Great Missenden to Amersham:** In the very early days following the setting up of the group this was one of the first walks that took place outside London. Led by Martyn, it became legendary as one of the muddiest walks we've ever done. Luckily on this occasion it was a bright sunny day and dry underfoot. One of the interesting churches en route was the Grade 1 listed St John the Baptist at Little Missenden — of Saxon origin with Mediaeval wall paintings. A very nice lunch was enjoyed at the Hit & Miss Inn at Penn Street. [Details.](#)

## June

**Welwyn Garden Circular:** Contrary to earlier forecasts the weather turned out to be perfect, albeit somewhat humid. Welwyn's open landscaped town centre looked its best with imaginatively planted flower borders. A good mix of terrain meant that there were plenty of wooded areas for some welcome dappled shade. Early summer flowers were in abundance everywhere. Locked gates at the exit from Bride Hall had us all stumped for a few moments until John noticed the cunning gate within the gate! Lunch in the garden at the busy Bocket Arms (with two other walking groups) was fast and efficient as a result of pre-ordering. A lovely day out, made all the better by the short easy journey to and from H&I! [Details.](#)





**Ramsgate to Margate.** Oh I do like to be beside the seaside... That was the case for nine of us throughout almost the whole of this easy 10-mile walk, alternating between cliff top, promenade and beach along the Thanet coastline. Less remote than most of our walks but an open feeling nonetheless, with fine views out into the English Channel. Good walking weather — dry, breezy, some sunshine but never too hot. People chose different options for lunch (pub, café or take-away fish and chips down by the harbour) in charming and genteel Broadstairs, with its literary connections to Dickens and Buchan. [Details.](#)

**Crews Hill** — this was a similar walk to one we did over a year ago, but this time we stuck to the route of Link 1 of the Hertfordshire Chain Walk. This was nine miles over rolling countryside. Lunch was at The Goff's Oak pub which we have used a couple of times in the past. Weather was good. For a long distance trail this route lacks signage and in places the path was heavily overgrown, but the majority of the route was on good tracks or quiet roads. Unfortunately the Great Northern line was playing up with trains cancelled when we got back to the station — but that gave us a chance to visit the local garden centre's tea room. [Details.](#)

**Watton-at-Stone:** Links 6 & 7 of the Hertfordshire Chain Walk, 10 miles. This was the most northerly of the Chain Walk that we've undertaken so far. It was easy to get to — well, that would be if the trains were running..... so we were about 45 minutes late starting, but soon made up time. It's been said online that 'This was definitely the best bit of the Hertfordshire Chain Walk so far' and I think we'd agree with that sentiment. It was a mixture of open rolling fields and woodlands. Some good wild flowers and debates over were they swifts, swallows, or martins — we settled on martins. Lunch service was a bit slow but in the heat no one was in too much of a hurry. The afternoon passed with more of the same. Great Northern tried its best to confuse us with trains back but in the end all was well and we returned to Islington within the original schedule. [Details.](#)



**Dedham** — this was a repeat of this popular walk last done in 2016. While classed as an 'easy circular 10 mile walk' the heat did make it seem longer. However, we had some tree cover along the Essex/Suffolk border through Constable country. We followed the Essex Way initially, then looped past Dedham, then back along the bank of the River Stour to Dedham Mill for lunch (and ice cream!). The afternoon saw a little more riverside walking before we headed up the gentle slope of the ridge to enjoy views back over Dedham Vale, before dropping back to the Stour at Flatford Mill (for afternoon tea). Some of our members had a little adventure themselves when they opted for a

quicker (??) route to the station (??) [Details.](#)

**July**

**Southease to Berwick** — 10 miles on the South Downs Way and the Vanguard Way. Luckily the trains were behaving themselves so we made it to our start point at Southease. This was a new section for us of the South Downs Way in the morning. A stiff climb up but then an easy along on the ridge. We had some breeze on top which was just as well with the temperature nearly at 30°. We dropped down to pretty Alfriston for lunch. Even though our group numbers weren't large, service at the George wasn't that speedy. But with the high temperature as it was, we weren't in any great hurry to move on. Which meant we were a bit later than scheduled leaving the pub.



We left the SDW at this point and headed north on the Vanguard Way. With the trains from Berwick only every hour we thought we had a chat to catch up and make the scheduled train — only to see it disappear as we neared the station. Which just meant we had to retire to the local pub instead to wait for the next one. No great hardship. [Details](#).



**Ashridge & Ivinghoe Beacon** — the trip should be renamed the Butterfly Walk. In spite of the heat (around 30°C in the early afternoon, we thought) there were hundreds of butterflies to be seen at nearly every moment during the day. We met an expert at one point who told us we were looking at a silver-washed fritillary, a large beautiful butterfly with tan/orange wings splashed and dotted with black. The silver-washed name refers to the underside of the wings, though some of us thought this description was a bit fanciful. Sadly the expert was on a mission to see many more, so he hurried on ahead of us. If only we could have kidnapped him to help with identifying

the many different ones we saw. There were also lots of wild flowers still in bloom on Pitstone Hill and Ivinghoe Beacon. We expected far more would have shrivelled in the heat. The nine walkers enjoyed the speedy service and good inexpensive food at the Brownlow Café near the Bridgewater Monument. The staff there were doing a great job with many many customers. And we were able to replenish water bottles there — essential in the heat. Some also took advantage of an ice cream van in a car park before tackling Ivinghoe Beacon. A couple of red kites were circling over Pitstone Hill, and we were entranced by the larks shooting up singing furiously. Much of the walk follows the crest of the Chilterns so the views across the Vale of Aylesbury, to Dunstable Downs, and Wendover Woods were stupendous. The latter part of the walk follows the Ridgeway, and we met at least one group who were nearing the end of their trek from near Avebury. They had taken six days for the 84 mile National Trail, and were clearly looking forward to getting their back packs off and meeting the taxi they had arranged to get them back to Tring Station. [Details](#).

**Kent Castles** — thirteen signed up for this walk, but fortunately Jan also joined us, thus staving off any ill-fortune. We traversed quiet and varied countryside between two rather remote stations on the Uckfield line, including frequent wooded sections providing welcome shade. We saw oast houses (synonymous with Kent) and alpacas (perhaps less so), passed three stately houses — Penshurst Place, Chiddingstone Castle and Hever Castle — and speculated about the myths associated with the Chiding Stone after which this National Trust-owned village is named. Most of us managed both a pub lunch and afternoon tea in the quirky Tulip Café. But no-one was prepared to own up to pulling the communication cord, which thankfully only slightly delayed the outward train journey. [Details](#).





**Marks Tey** — on another of the hottest days of the year a hardy half-dozen of us defied all official warnings to STAY INDOORS(!) and enjoyed a somewhat toasty walk around the Essex countryside. In open country and arable fields shade was in short supply, but alleviated by the occasional large tree and sections of woodland. An al fresco lunch was had at the Swan Inn adjacent to the mighty Grade II listed Chappel Viaduct. It is one of the largest brick-built structures in the country, built 1847-49 using some 7 million locally-made bricks. Although Chappel was an easy lunchtime drop out, it was great that all wanted to carry on for the full 10+ miles... but what a relief at the end to get on to a fully air-conned train! [Details.](#)

## August

**Epping Forest** — 16 turned out on this very hot day. Temperatures reached 32C so we were all glad of the tree cover that we had for most of the distance. While the shade kept us out of the glare of the sun there still was still a heavy heat in the forest. We traversed the length of the forest from Chingford in the south, and passed Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge to the Conservation Centre in the middle for lunch. Then after lunch we carried on in a north easterly direction popping out of the forest just on the outskirts of Epping. Eight miles was long enough on this very warm day. [Details.](#)



**Petersfield to Liss** — and it all started so promisingly! All 12 arrived punctually, the train ran to time and the forecast suggested we might avoid the rain expected in London and much of the south east. In the event it rained continuously through to lunch, although we quite welcomed the novelty aspect of this. Most were less impressed when the designated lunchtime pub declined our custom, despite our ringing two hours ahead. A team effort, including Barbara's local knowledge, enabled us to locate — and eventually navigate our way to — an alternative hostelry where the landlord seemed positively delighted to entertain us (literally in some respects). The detours and protracted

food service put us way behind schedule, but the rain abated, the Hampshire terrain and views provided excellent examples of our "green and pleasant land", and we eventually reached the supposed mid-way lunch village by about 3.45 pm. The leader's offer to shorten the 'afternoon' section was eagerly seized on by a clear majority and he only managed a couple more brief wrong turnings. In the end we did complete the promised distance of 10-11 miles, albeit by a rather different route from that initially specified, and to catch the planned return train. This walk provided evidence of the group's first-year motto ("we may go wrong but we'll never get completely lost") and of the capacity for group bonding and amusement in the face of adversity. Those lucky enough to be there probably won't forget the experience in a hurry. [Details.](#)



### **Dollis Brook to Cannonbury**

— this was our 200th walk since the group was formed in November 2013. To mark the occasion 31 turned out to do the walk (in part or in total). On our first walk there had been 6 people and 2 were on this 200th walk (Anne & Martyn). Within the 31 were many original group members who returned for this walk, as



well as many new members — a great mix. We started at West Finchley following the Dollis Brook valley, then picked up the Capital Ring to East Finchley and Highgate Woods where we had lunch. After that it was through Queens Woods to the Parkland Walk and down to Finsbury Park for tea. For there the last section we cut through Gillespie Park, circled the Emirates stadium, through Highbury Fields to end at the Cannonbury Tavern. There we made a presentation of our Long Walks cup to our 'special star walker of the year' — John Shrader.

[Details.](#)

**Ponders End to East India Docks** — This was a pleasant easy walk down the Lea valley following the canal. While it was quite long at 12 mls/ 20 km overall it was flat all the way. The weather was good and not too hot. Lunch was at the Princess of Wales by the canal. Then we carried on south passing Three Mills then skirting the Olympic Park. We stuck with the River (rather than the Limehouse Cut) but unfortunately they still haven't completed the section around Cody Dock so it was a detour through some ugly back streets before we regained the riverside near the converted East India dock and a view directly over to the Millennium Dome. A few carried on to Trinity Buoy Wharf for a nice tea stop. [Details.](#)



### **Wrabness to Manningtree via 'Grayson Perry House'.**

A beautiful sunny day for 16 of us to enjoy the delightful Stour Estuary. Starting with a close up look at the 'House for Essex' designed by artist Grayson Perry, we meandered along the Essex Way following the river inland towards our final destination at Manningtree. Lunch was had at the small village of Bradfield with half the group picnicking, the other half defying warnings about the pub...which luckily turned out to have new owners serving up good food! Continuing through arable fields, ancient woodland and water meadow via Mistley riverside we then had a very welcome tea stop at the home of iU3A member

Ruth....maker of very delicious cakes. Thanks Ruth!

[Details.](#)

## **September**

**Haslemere** — eight of us set out from Haslemere Station on a fine, early autumn day, and walked on the Greensand Way over heathland and woods, to Devil's Punchbowl. Some of us repaired to the pub for a better-than-expected lunch, while others used the NT cafe, and enjoyed the view. We continued on the Greensand Way to Gibbet Hill where we had stupendous views from the trig point for miles around, before dropping down through woods and across fields to Grayswood. There we refreshed ourselves with windfall apples left out for passersby by a kind resident, and walked on through more fields and woods,



snacking on fat blackberries. The day ended with excellent cakes and tea at a cafe in Haslemere. [Details.](#)



**Mortimer to Aldermaston:** just seven takers for this quiet and varied walk on the Hampshire/ Berkshire borders, three of whom were limbering up for the Shropshire weekend. In the morning we passed the Roman site of Calleva Atrebatum, exploring the amphitheatre (which the notices told us once hosted public executions) and walking along the town walls (see picture). After lunch in the very welcoming pub on Silchester common, we continued through mainly wooded terrain before reaching the Kennet and Avon canal at Aldermaston. The pleasant late afternoon weather persuaded five of us to extend the outing by following the canal towpath to Theale, a total

distance of just under 14 miles. We were rewarded by the improbable arrival of a fast through train to Paddington formed of just two coaches (although we did all manage to grab a seat.

[Details.](#)

**Church Stretton, Shropshire:** after the success of last year's visit to Freshwater Bay, Isle of Wight, we off for another three-night-away adventure. For a full report of this 4 day trip with photographs see [here](#). Trip details [here](#).



**Wanborough to Godalming:** this pretty 8 mile walk took us through the leafy Surrey countryside starting at Wanborough where we visited the tiny church built by Cistercian monks in 1130. Accompanied initially by blustery winds we crossed the Hoggs Back, to enjoy panoramic views of the Downs before ambling through the grape-laden Greyfriars vineyard. Picking up the North Downs Way towards Compton, we were soon passing under the Lutyens designed 'Pilgrim's Way' bridge to arrive at the GF Watts gallery and 'artist's village'. Here we had time to visit the unique Watts Chapel designed and built by Watt's second wife Mary.

Lunch was taken in the garden of the very welcoming Withies Inn. After more woodland walking we reached the River Wey to follow its meandering path into Godalming where we chose to end the day with tea and large slices of cake at the Community cafe. [Details.](#)

**Amersham & Winchmore Hill:** this was a repeat of a 12 mile walk done back in August 2016. However this time we added a bit of trail-blazing of new options so it ended up as a hybrid - and hence over 13 miles! While the extensions may not have been by design, they did add some extra sections of picturesque routes. These woods are tricky to navigate through! An excellent lunch was taken outside at the Winchmore Hill village pub. The afternoon took us back along the River Misbourne valley. The whole walk was conducted under glorious autumnal sun. [Details](#) [here](#).

