

Longer Walks 2013-14



Here is a record of our longer walks in iU3A's first year. 18 walks in all and if you'd walked all of them you'd have covered about 180 miles. 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](#)

November (2013)



Richmond to Putney (Thames Path): Great oaks from little acorns grow. The inaugural iU3A Longer Walks outing attracted a grand total of six members, including the iU3A chair, to enjoy (once no longer under the Heathrow flight path) a fine 9 mile walk along a peaceful part of the Thames Path passing Kew Gardens and the full length of the Oxford and Cambridge boat race. Fortified by a pub lunch at the riverside Ship Inn, all six of us made it - in some cases wearily - and despite a flood induced detour, to Putney. A notable feature of this walk was to realise just how much the river bends. [Details](#)



Regents Canal (Islington to Limehouse and Hackney Wick) This 9 mile walk doubled the turnout, with a dozen of us starting from Angel along the canal through Islington, past Victoria Park to the Thames at Limehouse basin. Our lunch stop was a traditional riverside pub - The Grapes on Narrow Street. The afternoon took us via Limehouse Cut to Bow locks, where we joined the Lea Valley navigation past the Olympic Park to Hackney Wick and the Overground back. Plenty of contrast between old industry and warehouses and the ever-growing number of modern canal-side apartments. [Details](#)



Green Chain (Thames Barrier to Plumstead Common): The last of the three inaugural walks surprised some of the six participants in showing the greenery and tranquillity that south-east London can offer. After viewing the Thames Barrier, the Green Chain, took in Charlton Park (and the House, a fine Jacobean mansion), Oxleas Wood (where the café offered oven-fresh bread pudding) and Bostall Woods. A more strenuous 9 miles than the previous two walks, with regular - quite short - ascents and descents. The return via the DLR also offered fine views as docklands lit up for the evening. [Details](#)

January (2014)



Chilterns (Great Missenden to Amersham) We kicked off the New Year with what has gone down in the annals as "the muddy walk" - a 9 mile undulating walk through woods, fields, chalk downs and small villages (with a number of interesting churches.) At most times of year this would have been easy going, but perhaps we should have known that a group of 13 would not be lucky. Heavy rain made it extremely muddy and hard going in parts. One person memorably briefly lost a boot in the mud. The lunchtime pub did us proud when we eventually got there but last mile uphill in fading light to the tube station will also be remembered! [Details](#)



Lee Valley (Broxbourne to Hertford East) Eleven of us enjoyed this second walk of the year, though one of us got stuck on the train after making a late visit to the toilet - happily re-joining us at the lunchtime pub (The George IV at Amwell, which won much praise.) This was a good 10 mile walk, mainly in the valley, by the river, canal and New River - which we traced to its 'source' near Ware. We also took in some pleasant, if sometimes muddy, woodland: Broxbourne Woods NNR and Hertford Heath, showing a new side of the area to some, and we stopped to look at the many ducks on Amwell Lake. [Details](#)

April



Thames Path (Hampton Court to Richmond Bridge) After a two month break while the country recovered from winter storms and floods, we resumed walking with this scenic 8 mile stretch along the river. A record (at the time) 15 walkers took advantage of excellent spring weather. From the north bank by Hampton Court Palace, we crossed the river at Kingston. A couple of people couldn't resist an early pub stop here, but the rest of us lunched at Teddington Locks (nice garden overlooking the river, but the food not good value for money). In the afternoon we continued past Ham House (about half of us visiting to enjoy tea in the Orangery). Then on

to Richmond and the London Overground service back to Islington. [Details](#)



Witley to Haslemere Forecasts of heavy rain deterred a few, but 10 joined this 8 mile stroll through Surrey countryside - a mixture of mainly wooded paths, bridleways, quiet minor roads and tracks, (including some National Trust land) with the more open stretches offering good views of the North Downs. We lunched at the quaint Elizabethan village of Chiddingfold some in a self-styled "idyllic English pub" (The Crown) others picnicking by the village pond. The views, spring flowers and birdsong held our attention through the day and the threatened torrential rain arrived only as we journeyed back to London. [Details](#)

May



Lee Valley (Broxbourne to Hertford East) By popular demand, our first 'repeat' walk – something we'll see more of as we return to revisit places at different seasons. So it was a leafy (and less muddy) stroll through Broxbourne Woods this time, with fewer ducks on Amwell Lake. If there were fewer spring flowers than we had hoped, around a dozen of us enjoyed a walk that seemed shorter than in winter – perhaps we were all that little bit fitter. But the pub was as good as the first time, and Ware seemed more opulent than ever. [Details](#)



Wimbledon Common and Richmond Park Nine people joined for all or part of this 9 mile walk based on a section of the Capital Ring, taking in some of the greener areas of south-west London. After passing the All-England tennis courts we climbed up to Wimbledon Common, detouring to take in the hidden gem of Cannizaro Park. Lunch at the Windmill Café, then an afternoon traversing part of Putney Heath, the dreaded Kingston bypass, and Richmond Park. Another detour took in the spring flowers of the Isabella plantation. Naturally, we also saw some deer before exiting the park for the gentle downhill stroll into Richmond. [Details](#)



Windsor Great Park (Sunningdale to Windsor) There were 10 takers for this pleasant and varied 9 mile trek, most of it through parkland and landscaped gardens, offering plenty of colour. In the morning we passed through Cowforth Park (well-known to polo fanatics) before entering Windsor Great Park and splitting into smaller groups to choose our separate routes through the picturesque Valley Gardens. We had lunch at The Savill Garden, renowned as England's finest ornamental garden. After lunch we passed just below the Copper Horse (an imposing hill-top monument to George III) before heading down the (very) Long Walk towards

the distant Windsor Castle. Too late to visit the castle by the time we got there, most of us enjoyed a well-earned drink before catching the train home. [Details](#)

June



For our first June walk we decided to support iU3A's contribution to Islington Giving Week. We walked the boundary of the borough, a pretty demanding 13 miles on city streets and in exceptional heat. A few joined us on the way at refreshment stops, but well done indeed to the finishers. Islington Giving is a charity supporting other charitable efforts in our borough. Its running costs are entirely met by the Cripplegate Foundation and so all contributions go to local charities. We raised over £250 and hope to exceed that in 2015.



Kent Castles A walk in mid-June took us past 3 Kent Castles. We started at Hever and a gentle stroll took us to Chiddingstone, where we had lunch in the fine old Castle Inn and explored the splendid gardens. The afternoon took us across more lovely Kent countryside, with a bit of everything: hidden streams and rivers, ancient woodland and some fine open grassland. Here is the group in a rather untypical scene, crossing a wheat-field. [Details](#)



Misbourne Valley (Chilterns) Late June saw 10 of us walk down the River Misbourne valley. Our record of good weather continued on a balmy day. Starting at Amersham town it was basically downhill for 10 miles following the course of the river. After a pleasant refreshment stop at the Merlin's Cave in Chalfont St Giles (where Milton wrote Paradise Lost) it was onwards down to the finish at Gerrards Cross. A good day out was had by all. [Details](#)

July



Chess Valley Early July saw a largish group in this lovely valley in the eastern Chilterns. Starting at Rickmansworth and finishing at Chesham, we were rarely far from this attractive chalk stream which has the last remaining water cress beds in the Chilterns. The walk included some fine woodland and meadow and even a hill or two as we left the valley - for lunch at the excellent Red Lion in Chenies, and later to pass by Latimer. It definitely didn't spot with rain at lunch-time on this walk and we never went slightly wrong either. [Details](#)



Constable Country Our mid-July walk was a delightful circular walk including Flatford Mill on the River Stour, pictured in one of Constable's best-loved paintings. One of our number had the opportunity to visit the graves of some of her ancestors, buried in the same churchyard as Constable's parents at East Bergholt. Another, who knows the area well and provided some valuable insights for the rest of us, said she enjoyed seeing it afresh through the eyes of others. Pictured here are some of us enjoying a posh ice-cream in Dedham on another great day for walking. [Details](#)

August



Thames Valley The first of our three August walks found ten of us enjoying a picturesque ramble in the Thames Valley. It proved a peaceful and scenic hike, initially along the Thames Path around Shiplake, then through farmland and forests taking us to back to the Thames at Henley. Some claimed that half a dozen drops of rain fell, but it was another splendid day for walking. About half the group took the opportunity to visit the house and gardens at the National Trust's Grey's Court, while the rest continued to Henley. The ever-helpful walk coordinator willingly provided a shuttle service to ensure no-one got lost in the woods. [Details](#)



Beaconsfield Circular Our second August walk took us on a circuit from Beaconsfield. The drought had to end sometime and finally it did. We witnessed rain real enough to warrant donning the kagouls - but fortunately only during the lunch stop (where the 'welcome' at the pub did not greatly encourage a return visit) and then again five minutes before reaching the train station at the end. Otherwise it was another very good walking day in typical Buckinghamshire countryside. We saw lots of trees and lots of horses, as well as a few more footpaths than strictly required by the intended route. [Details](#)

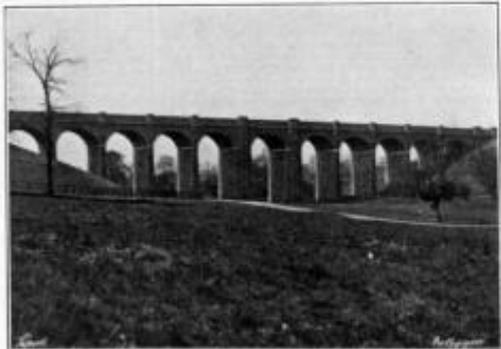


Fig. 12-SOPER'S FARM VIADUCT

The Glass Sea For our third August walk, eight intrepid souls (out of an original 18) set out to visit 'The Glass Sea', undaunted by a very poor weather forecast. They were rewarded by a dry and pleasant undulating circular walk north of Enfield. We started north through Soper's viaduct (pictured left in 1910) to Goff's Oak for a pub lunch. The heavens opened while we were inside but eased as we pressed on. Few of the once-famous glass houses raising vegetables for London remain to be seen nowadays but we still saw some. As we returned south we could just about make out the Shard in the distance. So another successful and enjoyable walk. [Details](#)

September



Gomshall to Guildford Our first September walk saw the return of the sunny weather we've become accustomed to. 15 of us (including the fiftieth member to join a walk) enjoyed a stroll through Surrey countryside between the North Downs and the Greensand ridge. We visited the charming village of Shere and finished along the River Wey navigation system into the heart of Guildford. At one point, an eagle-eyed walker spotted a snake. The inn (right) conveniently at the halfway point had closed down, but it is rumoured that some group members still managed a pub lunch, as well as a locally produced ice cream and afternoon tea. [Details](#)



Wivenhoe Circular Our mid-September walk was a real treat. For a perfect Indian Summer day, Rowena had selected a lovely figure of eight walk from Wivenhoe in Essex. First through timber-clad houses and out along the Colne estuary, then back to lunch at a fine pub, now run by the community. Then some shaded woodland before returning along the river to the start. From London, this was another world: boats, old and new, sinking into the sticky mud; shore-birds fluttering excitedly as the tide turned. Plus the odd bit of Dickensian machinery, ancient winches lacking cables, rotting wooden stumps in the tideway, for what original purpose exactly? [Details](#)



Hertfordshire Chain – circular from Cuffley Our third September walk was the second 'link' in the Chain, following on from the third August walk. Again we were lucky with the weather - no rain. The last of the overnight showers petered out just before we set off and we enjoyed some early autumn sunshine. All enjoyed a fine walk through rolling countryside north of Enfield. [Details](#)