

Longer Walks (October 2021 to September 2022)

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



Chenies and Sarratt: seventeen of us met at Kings Cross to take the Metropolitan tube to Chalfont & Latimer and celebrate the walk leader's birthday. We walked via the always wonderful Chess Valley, along the eponymous chalk stream, where the only commercial watercress farm is located due to the perfect conditions for this wonderful herb, towards Sarratt but not before we had made a little detour to Chenies to admire Chenies Manor House and the adjacent 15th century St. Michael's Church. It is famous for its magnificent Bedford Chapel, mausoleum of the Russell family (later Dukes of Bedford of Woburn Abbey). Onwards to The Cock in Sarratt where we celebrated Stuart's xxth (GDPR protected) birthday, who led this walk expertly as always and to boot offered us all our drinks. Thank you Stuart. A quick glance in the 12th century Church of the Holy Cross before we continued on the Chiltern's way, through Carpenter's Wood to Chorleywood. It was quite muddy at times from previous downpours but the

weather on the day was lovely throughout. Details [here](#).

Wivenhoe: this nine mile figure of eight walk is one of our favourites, first led by Rowena in 2014. It's a good mixture with a stretch first along the banks of the River Colne then into woodland and then across open farmland. After the first loop we were back in Wivenhoe for lunch at the local community-owned pub. During lunch we made the award of our annual cup, this year going to Rowena for her long term service as a Longer Walk leader — once a month from that first walk in September 2014. A well earned reward! The afternoon loop took us past the University of Essex campus and back down to the river. Perfect timing meant arriving back at the station just in time to catch the hourly train service. Details [here](#).



West Ruislip to Rickmansworth: despite a rather gloomy weather forecast 15 of us walked in sunshine until lunchtime following the Hillingdon Trail through fields from West Ruislip to Bayhurst Wood Country Park and on to Harefield Parish Church (parts dating back to the 12th century). This is well worth a visit but unfortunately not open on Tuesdays. In the churchyard we spent some time looking at the ANZAC war cemetery. Harefield Park was used for convalescing casualties from Gallipoli and the Western Front in 1915 and by 1916 was functioning as a general hospital with 1,000 beds. 112 of 50,000 patients treated at Harefield did not recover and are buried here.

Harefield Hospital became a world famous hospital, carrying out the first combined heart-lung transplant in 1983. Going up Church Hill, past the Almshouses, founded by the will of the

Countess of Derby in 1637 for six poor widows of the parish, we turned left at Bird Lane and eventually via paths reached the Grand Union Canal. After lunching outside at the Coy Carp (better service nowadays) we continued along the towpath to reach Rickmansworth Station at the same time as the local school children. Details [here](#).

Fens River Way: the Fens River Way traces the bank of the River Cam and Great Ouse for 50 miles from Cambridge to King's Lynn. Our hearty band of nine pilgrims was happy to just walk the ten or so miles from Waterbeach to Ely in a mixture of sun, wind and light showers. The walking, mostly along the high flood banks that rise above the rivers, was flat and easy, and not nearly as bleak as might have been expected, with plenty of wildlife even at this time of year — swans, herons and great-crested grebes, and a landscape of huge skies and endless fields, many with black chocolate soil. Motorboats and narrow boats waited for next summer's hire and seeing



the enormous Five Miles from Anywhere Inn on the opposite side of the river at the halfway point was a spur to reach our end of walk pub in Ely. After sheltering from the wind in a copse for a late picnic lunch we proceeded in a somewhat anti-social single file towards the vast hulk of Ely Cathedral which tantalizingly refused to come any nearer. At last, we reached Ely's beautiful staithe where in spite of a rain shower forcing us indoors, we felt content at having completed our pilgrimage. Details [here](#).

November



Watton at Stone to Hertford: we returned to this popular easily accessible area. Seventeen walkers enjoyed a varied, just over eight mile, walk along the River Beane from Watton at Stone to Hertford. Kingfishers and red kites were sighted. After a tasty and reasonably priced lunch at the Mill Stream pub we walked in the environs of Hertford, taking in a 12th century Norman church, the flood plains of the river Lea (Hartham Common) and the house where W.E.Johns, the creator of Biggles, was brought up above his dad's tailor shop. A welcome cup of tea at the station cafe before the short train ride home. Full details [here](#).

Blackheath to Wapping: this was an interesting walk through contrasting urban landscapes. Blackheath's wide leafy roads with large Georgian and Victorian villas, lovely autumnal tree colours in Greenwich Park and misty views over maritime Greenwich with a towering Canary Wharf backdrop. Crossing under the Thames via the foot tunnel to the Isle of Dogs and the best view back across the river of the Old Royal Naval College. Mudchute Park and Farm provided a touch of countryside in the city. Among the animals currently resident include a magnificent Ginger Tamworth pig, llamas, and pygmy goats. We left the meadow to enter docklands at Millwall Dock and follow the waterside path to South Quays for a good value lunch. The afternoon followed sections of the Thames Path, and through the backwaters of Limehouse, Shadwell and Wapping, with occasional misty views towards Tower Bridge and the Shard. We ended at Wapping Overground for a quick return to H&I. Details [here](#).





Amersham to Chalfont St. Giles: eleven of us met at Amersham station from where we did a lovely, undulating 8½ mile walk in the Chiltern Hills, with beautiful, late autumn colours on the trees. Our route took us from Amersham and the River Misbourne, uphill and over the nascent HS2 line, to Chalfont St Giles for an early lunch in the Feathers pub. A friendly landlady and service was enlivened by a series of erotic prints on the wall behind us in the Snug. Shortly after lunch, we came across a couple of old locals, Mike, and his friend, carrying shotguns, who had been ferreting for wild rabbits with a



mother and her albino daughter which we were allowed to stroke. Mike generously gave his rabbit to one of our party to skin, pouch and cook — much to her delight. We continued on the Chiltern Way, and eventually back down to Old Amersham where some of us had tea and home-made cakes before the final climb uphill back to the station in the dusk.



Epping Forest: we hadn't done this walk since August 2018 surprisingly as it's a pleasant eight mile walk right up the backbone of the forest. Threats of snow and winds with a tube strike didn't put 12 of us off. And we were rewarded: although it was cold there was no rain or snow, the forest gave us shelter and the tube trains ran sufficiently. Most of the leaves were down off the trees now but there were still interesting colours and hues with many knobbly 'faces' or other shapes from the beeches. While slow in taking our orders, the Kings Oak must win the award for fastest delivery of food — we'd hardly sat down — and tracked down Chris' lost phone (in his trouser turn-

up!) — before the food was on the table. Details [here](#).



Harpenden to St Albans: we were 11 when we started in Harpenden on a very sunny, so lucky, day to walk to St Albans. It was reasonably dry underfoot and a straightish and flat walk. We reached the Rose & Crown pub in Saunderton just after noon and it almost seemed closed. Seeing us, the patron quickly opened and we were read out a short but excellent menu. Doorstopper turkey & stuffing sandwiches, delicious soups and fish & chips were consumed with gusto. Eager not to miss the tearoom in St Albans cathedral we set a fair pace for the afternoon. It was quite chilly, but still sunny, so this really was the only way to keep ourselves warm. Three went straight to the

station, missing the post 3.00 pm highlights of a cathedral, tea, cake and evensong. The rest of us gorged on delicious cakes and marvellous leaf teas in glass pots. After a short visit of the cathedral another four called it a day. The last four of us then enjoyed a rather wonderful, and unexpected, privately guided tour by a very knowledgeable volunteer, found by Barbara and her friend Jane. We rounded the day off with a very atmospheric evensong with the boys' choir in this magnificent cathedral. Pretty perfect in anyone's books. Details [here](#).

December

Bow Brickhill to Leighton Buzzard: seven of us met at Euston Station aware of a fairly dodgy weather forecast. However, it stayed dry all day with occasional sunrays coming through. but it was very muddy in places so walking sticks were extremely useful. The always dreaded replacement bus only lasted a mere five minutes so no hardship there either. It was a straightforward walk via Back Wood and its lovely sequoia trees then south through Duncombe Wood to the Old Red Lion at Great Brickhill for an excellent lunch. After lunch we joined the Greensand Ridge Walk, with fine views out over the River Ouzel. We skipped tea because it was just too close to lunch, everyone was rather busy that night and we didn't fancy walking in the dark along the canal into Leighton Buzzard. A very pleasant walk and day. Details [here](#).



Christmas social walk: this was a leisurely 6½ mile walk from East Finchley back to Islington taking in parts of the Capital Ring and hopping between various green spaces. A number had decked out in festive dress to brighten the day. The end of the walk was back at Highbury in the pub where a few more joined the group for a good meal with of course silly jokes from the complimentary crackers. Walk details [here](#).

January 2022

Wanborough to Godalming: the weather forecast wasn't looking good but 17 still turned out for this pop-up walk walking across open fields, passing Wanborough Manor and its tiny church. Then over the Hog's Back (the North Downs ridge) descending through a proper vineyard and a golf course before splitting into two groups at the Watts Art Village. Nine of us visited the gallery, Limnerslea House and/or the chapel in various combinations. Those who visited hugely appreciated finally having the opportunity to visit a gallery on their footpath. An hour later the parties were briefly re-joined at the warm and welcoming The Withies pub in Compton, where group 1 was just polishing off their lunch. After the later lunch we were slightly unlucky in that it had just started to rain on an already saturated ground but it remained quite light. A quick journey home made it nevertheless a pretty near perfect day. Details [here](#).



North London Green Spaces: The weather forecast was dire, but luck was on our side: no rain before lunch and only a very light drizzle after lunch. We met at Finsbury Park Station and travelled on a route as follows: Gillespie Park, Emirates Stadium, Paradise Park, Regent's Park, Hyde Park to Kensington Palace and back via a loop, Green Park, St James's Park and back to Green Park and finally Green Park Station. It was a route near to home for everyone but, typically you often don't visit what's on your doorstep, so it was a good opportunity for everyone to appreciate London and share many points of interest along the way. There was much to learn! We started with 14 walkers and picked

up two more along the route, the advantage of a city walk. We had the restaurant, at the "Angel in The Fields" Pub, all to ourselves, for a nice lunch, with great service from the waitress. All in all, a good day and a good walk. Details [here](#).

Sturry to Canterbury: This was a beautiful walk through a quiet corner of Kent, taking in a series of ancient villages, each with a similarly ancient church and passing a series of charming rural pubs. The village of Wickhambreaux in particular is quintessentially English. The terrain was mostly flat, with only a few gentle hills, but there were still some good views just after Stodmarsh. Thank you to all my co-walkers but in particular to the triumfeminate of co-leaders who spontaneously helped to navigate through the Kent countryside. Mud wasn't our worst enemy: missing signage (not there?), paths that simply stopped near new builds, paths that were not on the map and an overambitious 11 mile walk on a winter's day 'far away'. On the other hand the weather was lovely all day, it was a new walk in a new area, excellent pub food with friendly staff, and the group still made the 5.26 pm fast train home. Details [here](#).



Richmond to Hampton Court: 14 of us had a pleasant, easy and dry five-mile walk along the river from Richmond to Kingston, where we had a delicious Lebanese lunch at Comptoir Libanais. After lunch, 12 of us crossed Kingston bridge and walked for a further three miles through Hampton Court Palace park, and up Long Water to the back of the Palace before exiting on to the river, and back to Hampton Court station for tea and homemade cakes. Details [here](#).

February

Dollis Valley Green Walk and Hampstead Heath: this was a pleasant winter walk of just under nine miles starting at Woodside Park to follow the Dollis Brook south to Hampstead Heath Extension and then to North End for lunch. A booking of 17 was a challenge for this busy pub but they coped well. After lunch we cut through to Hill House Gardens and the Pergolas, then went on to the Heath via Kenwood and passed the ponds. The possibility of a tea stop was too much so none went on up Parliament Hill; instead the tea and cake was much appreciated. Details [here](#).



Thames Path South, Woolwich to Erith: we hadn't done any of the south route along the Thames for some years and with the recent public announcement of more of this route being opened out to the Hoo peninsula as part of the England Coastal Path, it was time we returned. From Woolwich Arsenal 19 of us set out along the river. We followed the river eastward leaving the regal buildings of the Arsenal, tastefully redeveloped, and we passed a mixture of new housing developments to industrial areas (old and new). Great views across the river and big open skies. The ruins of old timber wharves and pontoons give an insight to how river trade has changed over the decades, or centuries. We branched off through Crossness Ecology reserve to find the pub inland. They turned out to be efficient at handling this big group and food was very reasonably priced. Afterwards we headed back to the river to pick up the Thames Path again and followed it into Erith, where in the future we hope to return to pick up our trail toward the North Sea. Details

[here](#).

Bayford and Little Berkhamsted: fourteen people attended this very enjoyable 8¾ mile ramble. Fortunately, it was a dry and fresh day between a few wet days and Storm Eunice of Friday 18th. The walk was extremely muddy at times, especially during the morning section. The party arrived at the Five Horseshoes pub, Little Berkhamsted, at 12.50pm, and had a good and very reasonably priced meal. Having pre-ordered our food options, we did not have long to wait for our food. The afternoon section was shorter, and less muddy, and we arrived back at Bayford Station with four minutes to spare to get the 15.17 train home. Details [here](#).

Kelvedon: despite dire warnings of heavy mud and overflowing rivers 11 well kitted out members of the group turned up for what proved to be a much less demanding exercise than feared with strong winds and good morning weather having dried out the worst of the sludge. The route mostly followed field edges and quiet lanes while a couple of stretches of more main road were excused as they allowed us to see the older buildings of Kelvedon and the incredible number of listed houses in historic Coggeshall. Although not serving food at lunch time, the old-worldly Woolpack Inn in Coggeshall welcomed us to have our food inside. Three took the bus from there while the rest of us followed the River Blackwater and blackcurrant fields (destined for Ribena suggested our Essex local) back to Kelvedon station. Details [here](#).



March



Broxbourne: Because of the underground strike we got an overground train promptly and empty to Hackney Central, then a quick change to Hackney Downs to Broxbourne. From there we were quickly out of the village and into the wonderful but muddy and at places waterlogged Broxbourne Woods National Nature Reserve (NNR) and Hoddesdon Park Wood. We passed the very noisy dinosaurs at Paradise Park, before a good lunch at the "Woodman & Olive" in Wormley West End. After lunch we visited the Sculpture Trail in Broxbourne Woods before a very long and muddy route back to the station. We all walked some 12 miles/20 kilometres with no rain. A long but satisfying day

for all. Details [here](#).

Brentwood: nine walkers travelled to Brentwood and back on brand new trains — soon to be the Elizabeth Line. Although it was still very muddy underfoot, determined walking through the woods in the morning meant we reached Warley Place Nature Reserve before the forecast rain. The snowdrops and daffodils in the old garden were splendid and encouraged some to linger but the lure of the lunchtime pub next door proved stronger for others! After lunch it was uphill across field edges and more mud at Tylers Common but only patchy, light rain. Gravelled paths for the last downhill stretch through Pages Wood enabled us to reach Harold Wood station exactly on schedule for an easy journey home. Details [here](#).



Erith to Bexley: a walk we last did in 2015 but we enjoyed the repeat. It was an easy 8½ mile walk, initially along the Thames then turning inland through some of south London's green spots. We did have some unforeseen events. The detour we took to see the Grade II listed moat house turned out to be a dead end so after the viewing we had to retrace our steps. Then although we seemed to be following the London Loop directions, the 'Site Manager' of a building development insisted we couldn't pass through leading to another detour. This all led to us being rather late for our pub booking but luckily we still could fit in. After lunch it was straightforward following London Loop directions to Old Bexley. Details [here](#).



Braintree to Witham: Not sure that more than a couple of the 10 of us who turned up at Stratford for this Essex walk had ever heard of John Ray, the son of an Essex village blacksmith, who in the seventeenth century became the most important British scientist of the natural world. It was certainly perfect weather for walking the 9½ miles from Braintree station to Witham, some of it along paths he might have used to walk to school and collect specimens. We found his grave in the Black Notley churchyard before lunching at the Cross Keys pub in White Notley, sitting happily outside to avoid the wake that had booked the rest of the pub, although we glanced enviously at their largely untouched buffet. A mile further on we meandered through the really impressive medieval buildings of Cressing Temple before a stretch of road gave way back on to the field paths and wooded lanes that led us to Witham — a great group of people on a lovely day. Details [here](#).

Great Chesterford to Newport: this was a walk of just over 10 miles through rolling countryside. We crossed the River Cam to walk through the pretty village of Great Chesterford then headed through open countryside towards Little Chesterford. We reached the interesting market town of Saffron Walden which was the centre of the saffron crocus industry in the middle ages. After lunch we left the town and crossed into Audley Park then to our final destination of Newport. Details [here](#).



Cheshunt to Roydon: this was an extra 'pop-up' walk of 10 miles in Hertfordshire. We set off on a very cold, greyish day to be met by snow flurries as we got off the train at Cheshunt. This combination had one real advantage. Picturesque Lea Valley Country Park was unusually all but deserted apart from the profusion of birdlife on all the lakes we walked along and, where bridges permitted, over. Grebes were perhaps the most impressive. It remained cold but gradually cleared so by the time we got to the top of Clayton Hill we had superb views west down to the Lea, once the border between Danelaw and Wessex, and far beyond. We had a good lunch at the Fish and Eels pub

beside the weir, marvelling at the new menu with calorie counts for everything. Some surprises but I don't think it changed anyone's choice. A shorter afternoon walk took us away from the river again before bringing us down to Roydon for the largely empty train back. A satisfying day, making the best of the weather we were given! Details [here](#).

April

Flitwick: we were seven on this walk with a dodgy weather forecast but were spared the worst. It was actually a very nice day with some good sunshine, occasional wind and some rain at the beginning but nothing serious. We followed the tranquil Flit River, where the muddy path had transformed itself into a good hard path since my last visit, and meandered along the shady wooded fringes of Flitwick Moor, and then away from the river through a couple of quiet villages, en route passing the Grade I-listed [De Grey Mausoleum](#) in Flitton. After a very good lunch in The Flying Horse which had just reopened after a major refurbishment we walked below the the ridge for a nice stretch through and along Maulden Wood, with some fine views south to the Chiltern Hills. The highlight was the passage through Flitton and Flitwick Moors, along a narrow path through the very heart of Flitwick Moor. The rain held off till we had boarded the train. Details [here](#).



Saunderton to Princes Risborough: a lovely sunny day (not forecast) saw us casting off outer layers within 15 mins of leaving Saunderton station, and the sunshine stayed with us all day. Spring was definitely in the air — all fresh green growth, spring flowers and lambs gambolling in the fields. Lunch was some six miles into the walk in the village of Church End. The Lions pub is a great stop for ramblers with plenty of inside and outside space, and a good lunch menu. It was a real pleasure to be eating outside in the pretty garden — pretty that is, apart from the ugly leylandii hedge, obviously cut back using the 'I've just got a new chainsaw' style of pruning. After lunch we

had a quick tour round Church End's lovely Lyde Gardens, carefully planted and landscaped in a valley setting where six springs meet. The short afternoon walk to Princes Risborough took us through more pleasant Chiltern countryside, and luckily for some, we came across a roadside plant stall handily close to the station. Unfortunately we just missed a train and in the absence of any nearby cafes, the delightful man in the ticket office rustled up as many mugs as he could find and made us cups of tea! What a star! Details [here](#).

Royston: this was a circular from Royston starting on the Hertfordshire Way over Therfield Heath and finishing on the Icknield Way Trail after lunch at The Fox and Duck in Therfield. 15 of us completed the walk, which everyone said they enjoyed, not least because it was comparatively short — 2½ hours to an excellent pub, but only 1¼ back to the station! This was despite a wobble at the beginning with travel disruption and a train being cancelled. However, a quick jog from St Pancras to Kings Cross recovered the situation with only one member being lost in transit! The highlight of the day was sighting the lovely Pasque Flowers which we saw carpeting Church Hill in a welcome sunny spell. Details [here](#).



Berwick to Exceat: starting from Berwick from a 'hidden' path we walked through pastures and enclosed path towards our first of two churches in the pretty village of Alciston. The next church at Berwick was the true highlight of the walk because exquisitely decorated by members of the Bloomsbury Group in the 1930s. Via fields, slightly climbing and then descending with great views of the South Downs we arrived for an excellent and efficient lunch at The George in Alfriston. The sun came out and we walked to Exceat along the meandering river Cuckmere towards the eponymous Haven where half of our group took the bus to Seaford. The lucky ones, with no evening commitments, had a glorious late afternoon 90 minute walk in full sun and with magnificent views backwards towards the Seven Sisters. After a well deserved drink at the Steamworks and Fish & Chips for one, we returned. No swims were attempted although PD definitely owes us one having harassed me all the way about where and when. Full details [here](#).

May

Roydon: with good, quick tube and rail links, we started walking before 10.30, leaving Roydon and the Stour River to head into surprisingly rolling south Hertfordshire countryside and sunshine. We followed the Harcamlow Way heading north, meeting and then taking the Hertfordshire Way to drop steeply with good views of the Lea Valley to the west. We had a very agreeable and promptly served lunch sitting outside just beside the Lea River at the Jolly Fisherman pub in the attractive small town or big village of Stansted Abbots. After lunch we followed the Riverside path of the New River, which remains close to the Lea itself but ends up in Islington. In our case it brought us to Broxbourne Station, the planned end of our 10 mile walk. As it was only just after 2.00 and the group was full of beans, we all decided to go for a three mile extension to Cheshunt via flat well-marked paths through woods and lakes in Lea Valley Country Park. We still managed to get back to Islington by 5.00. All in all, a satisfying, energetic day's walk. Details [here](#).



Tring: this was a delightful 10 mile walk in the Chilterns, initially following the Ridgeway up to Ivinghoe Beacon, for a 360° panoramic view of surrounding countryside. The huge chalk figure of a lion dominating a nearby hillside was apparently created a century ago to advertise the opening of Whipsnade Zoo. There were a number of Spring delights to follow. Dockery Woods and Flat Isley are known as two of the best bluebell woods in the Southeast. Although they were still much in abundance the flowers were starting to fade, making space for the white blooms of wild garlic. (Note for 2023: try to time this walk a week or so earlier!) The day had started inauspiciously with threatening grey

skies shortly followed by a heavy downpour and scramble for the waterproofs. Luckily the skies cleared when we reached the Beacon, and from then on we enjoyed a warm sunny day. A late lunch at the Bridgewater Arms meant a short afternoon return walk to Tring through more bluebell woods and with an ice cream opportunity as we paused at the Bridgewater Monument visitor centre. Details [here](#).

Wye to Westhanger: the group gathered shortly after 11.00 at Wye station just east of Ashford, on the London–Canterbury line on a fine, semi-cloudy and breezy day. We skirted the village and headed up onto the aptly named Wye Downs, part of the North Downs. At the top we reached and indeed trod on the Wye Crown, a huge chalk crown etched into the top of the hillside about 120 years ago and visible from quite a distance below. Here we joined the North Downs Way and from here on had fantastic views to the south west as we walked the Downs' leading edge with a sharp drop into the plain below. Once up the walking was fairly easy and peaceful. After about five miles we began our short descent from the top to the village of Brabourne, arriving at the Five Bells pub on the dot of 2.00pm, precisely as per programme (!) for what all said was a very good lunch, outside but with canvas cover protection. For our final four miles, we headed first to Brabourne church and through the churchyard, and then through gently rolling farmland and pasture, with lovely downland views above us on our left, until at the edge of a wood we came unexpectedly on large numbers of orchids, to the delight of the more flower-minded members of the group. At the end we trudged through the (perfectly nice) village of Stamford, crossed the bridge over the roaring M20 to arrive at Westenhanger station in good time for the train from Dover back to London. Details [here](#).

June

Sevenoaks: with a return ticket of £3.45 and a short train ride this must be one of the nicest and best bargain walks outside of London. Leaving the station at 10.30 we were soon walking through the Knole House Estate deer park and then into pretty undulating Kent countryside heading towards Ightham Mote, a wonderful mediaeval moated house where we would have a cafe lunch. The afternoon return was along the Greensand Way, a lovely wooded ridge walk with occasional spectacular views across the Kent Weald. Leaving the Greensand way we re-entered Knole Park with plenty of time to have a leisurely tea and cake stop, enjoy the sunshine, and admire the wonderful roof line of Knole House. Details [here](#).

Margate to Ramsgate: The sun was out when our group, including a new iU3A and Longer Walks member who was delightful, met at Margate station to start our walk to Ramsgate via the beach and coastal path. Our walk leader Pia took us past the Turner Contemporary museum, Antony Gormley's Another Time, onto the soft sandy beaches of —Walpole, —Palm, —Botany and Joss Bay where four of us enjoyed a picnic (thanks Pia for sharing your delicious sandwiches) and the rest climbed the cliff to have a quick lunch in the Captain Digby pub. Braving a little drizzle we arrived at quaint Broadstairs to have a hot cuppa in the Jetty Cafe waiting for the pub lunchers. We then made our way via the beach and the promenade on to Ramsgate to catch our various trains home from there. Potential swimmers might have felt disappointed for the lack of opportunity but the walk by the seaside was certainly pleasant, invigorating and a good occasion to renew acquaintances and make new friends. Details [here](#)

Around Lewes: this was a circular walk of about 10 miles (depending on which app you looked at!) on a hot day. We last did this walk in May 2018 so it was good to get back on the South Downs. The climb up out of Lewes to the South Downs was the tricky bit but then the views and the cooler breeze made this worthwhile. The skylarks and birds of prey soared above us. We then left the Downs and dropped down to picturesque Rodmell for lunch. After a good lunch we stayed in the Ouse valley and wound our way back toward Lewes (hot again!). We paused to

view the Grand Design house as we entered Lewes. Most stayed for a cream tea before heading home. Details [here](#).

Amersham: to avoid train and tube disruption we stayed close to London for this 8½ mile walk around Amersham via Chalfont St Peter. 12 of us set off from Amersham and had a good lunch in the garden of The Feathers pub in Chalfont St Giles. Two of our party peeled off after lunch, and the remaining 10 continued on to Old Amersham across fields of ripening barley and wheat, interspersed with paths almost swamped by stinging nettles. Storm clouds threatened, but no rain materialised, and we had a delicious tea in the town before tramping back up the hill to catch the Metropolitan line back to London. We seemed somehow to have walked 9½ miles with no ill effects. Details [here](#).

Welwyn: the trains ran on time, the weather was perfect for walking, the route passed through woodland, grassland and fields awash with barley and wheat, and lunch at the ancient Bocket Arms was pronounced good enough. We walked part of the Lea Valley, the Hertfordshire Way and the Ayot Green Way, a disused railway line. The backdrop to the photo (to follow) is the old Norman church in Ayot St Lawrence, the village where George Bernard Shaw lived for 40 years. Details [here](#).

July

Sawbridgeworth and Bishops Stortford: this was a varied 11 mile walk through the attractive Stort valley on a dry, sunny if slightly humid day. The route took us from Sawbridgeworth, a town with many fine listed buildings, out to open countryside with golden fields under big blue skies, and via the village of High Wych to take a look at its church with unusual interior wall decoration. Then to the tranquil towpath of the meandering River Stort Navigation with its mills, maltings, locks and narrowboats. Next, a detour via Pishiobury Park, a historic Grade II* listed parkland, before returning to the river to head back into Sawbridgeworth for lunch. The afternoon route continued north along the towpath until Tednambury Lock where we headed cross country via Hallingbury Mill, through villages, paddocks, woods and a lovely private garden to eventually rejoin the towpath at Twyford Lock to take us into Bishop's Stortford. Lots to enjoy and surprisingly few people about. Details [here](#).

Sandling to Folkestone: On a fine, dry but pre-heatwave Tuesday, the group and leader met at Sandling Station at 11.20am, walking first along an old and therefore shady disused railway line past Kentish orchards to the village of Saltwood and its imposing Norman castle, once the home of Lord "Civilisation" Clarke, then of Alan "Diaries" Clarke. Next up on to the Downs, with fantastic if hazy views as far as Dungeness, past a big military cemetery, also with great views down to the sea. We walked along the promenade at Sandgate, had an agreeable, slightly too sunny outside cafe lunch, then headed up through parkland, past Saga Holidays' well set HQ, up to the Leas, a beautiful and very wide grassy mile long promenade at cliff top height with superb Channel views. There we passed Folkestone's two top and still imposing Edwardian hotels, the Metropole and the Grand, both now sadly defunct, before pausing for a well deserved tea, then turning off to the station for the 5.00pm back to London. Much packed into nine miles. Details [here](#).

Tunbridge Wells: an 11 mile walk through rolling Kent countryside, with occasional brief forays into Sussex. So much beautiful woodland! Welcome shade on a day which turned out to be warmer than predicted. The Crown at Groombridge didn't disappoint, and Groombridge Manor with its surrounding moat lived up to its reputation as a popular setting for period films. Thanks to local guest leaders Tony and Libby for helping to organise and providing a change of company for the eight regulars who came. Details [here](#).

Wye to Canterbury: this was an easy 12 mile wander along wide, gentle and sometimes very ancient (the PiIgrims Way no less) paths to Canterbury. We climbed up to the top of the North Downs then through varied but very mature woodland, descending to Chilham for lunch in the town square cafe. Chilham is a very picturesque place with its hilltop square, edged by lovely old often medieval buildings and a castle. After lunch, we dropped a little to follow the pretty, burbling Stour River, right into Canterbury and our station, which we reached without really noticing any suburbs en route. The timing was impeccable. The London train came into the station as we arrived and the last of our group got on a second before the doors closed! Details [here](#).

August

Windsor and Eton: This 9.7 mile walk was a last-minute proposal to fill an empty slot in our

weekly schedule. It did come up against an obstacle, which meant the route was not all off-road but despite that there were a lot of positives, one of which that it attracted 15 walkers. We used the Elizabeth Line: for most people this was their first trip and they were impressed, especially that there was no cost with the freedom pass. At Slough we changed trains where the guard kindly held the train for us for the six minute trip to Windsor & Eton Central. We started with a short walk from the station to join the Thames Path in Windsor. The original plan was to walk through Windsor Park to join the riverside path along the Thames to Albert Bridge, but the park is now closed. Instead we followed the Thames Path all the way to the Albert Bridge, then looped back along the road directly to Datchet, which although not ideal, has pleasant and wide footpaths. We stopped in the pleasant town centre of Datchet for our lunch. The food came promptly, so quickly that the drinks came afterwards! The food was good and the Royal Stag Pub set us up at a nice long table outside, with loads of privacy and plenty of opportunity for picnickers to join us. After lunch we walked on a path parallel to the golf course, then across Eton's playing fields and past the college, which fuelled much conversation and opinions by the walkers! We continued along the river and through some meadows to the hamlet of Eton Wick. Just before reaching Windsor, we had a majestic view of Windsor Castle, the perfect photo stop. Then we were back to the station, some with an ice cream, for the return journey to London. Details [here](#).

Broxbourne Woods: we changed this walk, due to the forecasted high temperatures, to this one because it was in woods for a fair proportion of the time, as the name suggests. This was much appreciated. With temperatures into the low 30s shade was essential. It was also a shortened version of a walk that we've done previously. The lunchtime refreshment stop was also much appreciated not to mention the extra pub stop at the end. Details [here](#).

Berkhamsted: this Berkhamsted circular took seven of us past the substantial remains of an important 11th to 15th century motte-and-bailey castle, up to the 1832 Bridgewater monument on the Ashridge estate dedicated to 'the father of inland navigation' — the Duke of Bridgewater was famous for building canals — and back to the station along the Grand Union canal built in the 1790s (but not by him). Lunch at the National Trust cafe halfway round included ice creams. The route was loosely based on previous walks but as one group member said 'I've done the walk to the Bridgewater monument several times but never quite like this'. A jolly ticket collector organised a communal singing of Happy Birthday to one of the passengers on the train home, in which we participated, maybe helped by the purchase of cold beers at Berkhamsted station... We were brought down to earth by a torrential downpour on arrival in Islington, having enjoyed fine dry weather all day. Details [here](#).

Tewin: this was a 10 mile circular from Welwyn North, done before but with variations. Because it was a Monday the regular pub was closed, so we had to tweak the route and have a late lunch at a different pub. But all worked out OK. A good walk with a variety of landscapes. Details [here](#).

September

Stanford-le-Hope to Pitsea: this was an 11 mile walk along the Thames Estuary path (and now part of England's Coastal Trail). We passed through many nature reserves. Low-lying and we could imagine when most of this was under water, hence all the churches built up on hillocks. Lunch was at Fobbing, the start of the Peasants' Revolt. Then a bit of a trudge on to Pitsea. Details [here](#).

Deal to Dover: Jan stepped in at short notice to fill a gap in our schedule. The walk started just after midday at Deal station from where we walked five minutes to the seafront, past Deal castle, then for a mile or so along the promenade path to Walmer castle. From here we took an uphill path slightly inland to Hawkhill Down, a lovely, small but rewilded down that notices informed us, with other details, served in both wars as an airfield for our war planes. From here we walked to the village of Kingsdown with lovely elevated sea views as we walked, before returning to sea level and the coast via an enclosure where we spotted spotted pigs. We then climbed up on to the cliffs at the start of the six miles or so of the famous White Cliffs and the clifftop path. We lunched at the Pines Cafe in St Margaret's Bay, which also serves as a museum for the huge amount of WW2 history there (it was known as Hellfire Corner because of its position and the firing across the Channel — France is only 18 miles away). After lunch we headed slightly inland into coastal rolling downland before hitting the coast again at the lighthouse above St Margaret's Bay — another spectacular view both ways as the coast turns a corner here. We then followed the dramatic coast and cliffs round to Dover with long views of the enormous port area as we got near. The walk finished with a short descent to the front at

Dover then a further ten minutes to the train which departed at 5.45pm, reaching London an hour later. Details [here](#).

Exmoor, Extended Walking 2022: our annual weekend away was to Exmoor. We had four fine days of walking with spectacular views every day. Encountering real hills was a novelty for this London-based walking group but all rose to the challenge successfully. Details [here](#).

40th Anniversary Celebrations – Walking Around London, Chigwell to Harold Wood: Islington U3A's contribution to this initiative for all London u3as to participate in walking the 230 miles around the Capital Ring and the LOOP. Our allocation was two adjacent sections of seven miles then five miles of the 'LOOP'. The 11 of us on the walk collectively contributed 125 miles. While rain threatened it turned out a fine day through mostly rural landscape with many 'Interesting Facts' en route. Details [here](#).

Wye to Chilham: this walk was just over nine miles. We passed through Wye Village then up and along the edge of the Wye Downs with fantastic long views down to the plain to the south and west. We turned away from the downs' edge, going through rolling and very peaceful downland countryside. We stopped for lunch at the tiny hamlet of Sole Street then continued before finally descending slowly and gently to the pretty village of Chilham. Details [here](#).