



## Longer Walks (October 2023 to January 2024)

Here is a record of our iU3A longer walks in the 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

**Kew:** This will probably go down in the annals of Longer Walks as the flattest ever, with someone's app showing a maximum elevation of 13 feet along the 10 mile route (probably the top of the bridge at Teddington Lock!). However there was plenty to interest the 15 of us, exploring the further reaches of Bushey and Hampton Court parks, including the heavily wooded 'plantations'; the palace's Long Water, and large herds of royal deer. Continuing across Kingston bridge we followed the Thames' south bank as far as Teddington Lock, where we stopped for lunch in the Anglers' delightful riverside garden. Then continuing on the north bank we had a peek at Strawberry Hill house and Pope's Grotto, before finishing with a quick sweep through charming old Twickenham. Details [here](#).

**Dover to Folkestone:** this was a 9 mile walk largely along the cliffs around Dover. Details [here](#).

**Sedbergh, Extended Walking Weekend:** again we were amazingly lucky with the weather. No rain over the whole four days. This was our biggest group outing at 29 walkers. But all seemed to go smoothly. We managed to offer a choice of three walks on the Sunday. Which was appreciated after the difficult 'long walk' on Saturday. Thanks to Poppy and Berry for supporting these walk options. Full weekend report [here](#). Logistic details [here](#).

**Cockfosters to Turkey Brook:** this was the third outing on this walk this year, but the first time in many years for this leader. It was always one to be wary of in winter due to probability of mud and flooding from Salmons Brook, but has recently been transformed by an extensive network of accessible walking and cycling paths. Enfield aims to be London's greenest borough by 2031, forming the cornerstone of London as a national park city. The ambitious project to reforest and rewild Enfield Chase by planting 100,000 new trees is already in evidence and will eventually transform the landscape. For us, it meant an easy walk at a good pace with the rain holding off until mid afternoon. An efficient lunch was had at The Rose & Crown, Clay Hill. Later, after an unscheduled 'investigative' diversion we worked up enough appetite for tea and cake at Myddelton House. A quick tour of the gardens before heading to the station left us joining the 'school's out' crowd battling to get on the train at Turkey Street. Note to self: must avoid the 15.37 train in future! Details [here](#).

**Wendover to Tring:** this was an 11 mile walk mainly along the Ridgeway Path. We had previously done some of this trail — the western end and the north reastern end but for many this section was a revelation. Much of it was through woods, with some steady though not steep ascents. There was a breakout to reach the Greyhound pub at Wigginton. Afterwards we picked up the Ridgeway again along a wide woodland track with good views to the north-west and then dropped down to Tring Station. We were lucky with the weather again with a particularly sunny afternoon for this time of year. Details [here](#).

**Harpenden to St Albans:** it was a lovely sunny autumn day when 12 of us walked from Harpenden to St Albans. We were pleased to see how well Heartwood Forest — the

largest continuous new native woodland in England — was growing. More than 600,000 new trees have been planted since 2009. After a good and reasonably-priced lunch in the Green Man at Sandridge, the Hertfordshire Way took us through the country estate of Childwickbury Manor, one time home of Stanley Kubrick where members of his family still live. On reaching St Albans our route passed through the older parts of the city, including the cathedral which has the longest nave of any cathedral in England. After 11+ miles we were glad of the frequent and fast Thameslink trains taking us back to St Pancras. Details [here](#).

## November

**St Margarets to Bayford:** This walk can be summed up in two words: wet and rain! After a short trouble-free journey to St Margarets, we set off in light rain, soon leaving the road and heading across fields with still reasonable views towards the eastern side of London and not too much sludge and mud. We passed through the ample grounds of Haileybury public school and, with continuing and increasing rain, into a clear, straight woodland path, which turned out to be part of the ancient Roman road, Ermine Street. Then, through further woods, mercifully in this case, as they provided some shelter against the now heavy rain, we followed the Hertfordshire Way for a while. We then headed south but to avoid rain, puddles and mud wherever possible, missed the path beside Paradise Wildlife Park with its huge dinosaur models and dinosaur 🦖 roars. Next time?

Wet through but triumphant we reached the Woodman and Olive where we enjoyed good Greek-themed food. After lunch, the rain amazingly stopped as we walked through Broxbourne woods, seeking elusive small paths and (successfully) avoiding quagmires. The final stretch was through a deserted and slightly bedraggled golf course to get to Bayford Station, just in time for the 4.18 train back to Highbury and Islington. 13 stalwarts set off and 12 made it all the way! I realise as a leader I am getting a reputation as a rainmaker. If only...this one was dry compared to one I did from Dover to Folkestone about a year ago when the heavens really did open. But what an experience! Details [here](#).

**Dorking to Reigate:** ten of us followed the river Mole upstream from the foot of Box Hill through the picturesque villages of Brockham, Betchworth, where we had an excellent lunch in the Dolphin Inn, and Skimmington, ending in the grounds of Reigate Priory. Part of the route followed the Greensand Way long-distance footpath along the sandstone rock stratum that separates the chalk downland of the North Downs from the more varied soils of the Low Weald. Despite the fairly dire forecast we only 'suffered' spitting rain before lunch and the afternoon was dry; even the sun came out for a short while giving a splendid light over the valleys and autumnal trees. A good day's walking at just over 8 miles for this time of year and we all caught the 4.00pm train to Victoria. Details [here](#).

**Kenley to Caterham:** a short (8.8 miles) but hilly walk on the slopes of the North Downs was an ideal November walk, and luckily we had one of the few days of decent weather to go with it. From Kenley station we were straightaway into the first climb of the day on to Riddlesdown with a valley view from the top and a chance to catch our breath. Then via a series of meadows, through woods and open country, we arrived at Warlingham for a lunch stop where we were spoilt for choice between two very large pubs, an excellent cafe and for picnickers a village Green with benches. The afternoon walk was distinctly tougher, with steep climbs as it crossed three valleys, and more scenic, with views and woodland paths made pretty by fallen leaves. The last of these led us down from the final ridge directly into Caterham, just minutes from the station, shops and cafes. Details [here](#).

**Pitsea to Leigh-on-Sea:** the weather was good, cold but bright, which followed a day of rain, which made the going muddy. We slithered around on most of the morning's

route, which slowed us up (and hence allowed a member behind to catch us up). Leaving the railway's side we turned into nature reserves, typical of this estuary area. The tide was in and very high, which probably added to the general ground water levels. The level of cloggy mud and clay grew on our boots. But 17 of us made it to Benfleet for our lunch stop — where some enjoyed the two course 'Senior's bargain deal'. The afternoon walk was different, the path was dry (most of the way) and we climbed up to Hadleigh Castle. From there the vistas over Canvey Island and the Thames were glorious, as the sun started to set. Details [here](#).

## December

**Abbey Wood to Woolwich:** On a heavily overcast day that threatened rain but mostly held off, twelve of us explored sections of the Green Chain Walk in south east London, passing through heathland, commons and autumnal ancient woodland, with some great if misty views to the City, the Downs and Dartford crossing. There were strenuous climbs on the 10 mile route, and the heavy leaf fall of the previous week made some stretches treacherous, but we made it, first to a coffee stop at Oxleas Wood cafe, then finally to the Dial Arch pub in Woolwich for a late lunch. Details [here](#).

**Christmas Social, Lee Valley to the Angel:** we started at Tottenham Hale with a short walk to Walthamstow Wetlands (where some caught a glimpse of a kingfisher). Cutting through there took us to the River Lea and the Lee Valley Walk. We crossed some of Hackney Marshes and picked up the canal side. A heavy squall meant we dived for some cover just as we approached the Olympic Park. The worst had blown over in 10 minutes allowing us to proceed to Hackney Wick station. There some left and others joined. From there we crossed into Victoria park and time for a coffee stop. After that we picked up the Regents Canal heading west to Islington. Just as the rain started to come on heavy again we reached the Island Queen pub in Noel Road. There there was a surprise (to Derek anyway) of a presentation to him from the Group for his coordination of the group for nearly ten years (something to put his whisky in!). Some of the 27 walkers just enjoyed the drink others settled down to a full three-course Christmas lunch. Walk details [here](#).

## January 2024

**Dollis Valley Path and Hampstead Heath:** with recent heavy rain choosing this walk was tricky. The first one chosen was impassable due to mud. So this walk was chosen as it was mostly on paths. It proved a popular choice. All 16 came as per the register, though one or two left us at or soon after lunch. It had rained very heavily overnight and we soon encountered a deeply flooded path. This required a detour through neighbouring streets. Otherwise the walk was reasonably straightforward alongside a very full and fast flowing river. We were very well looked after by the Old Bull & Bush for lunch. Afterwards we found the Pergola partially closed for overdue renovation. By the time we toured the Heath and Kenwood, the sun was out. Some of us then delighted in finding some more mud, en route to Highgate ponds and the fantastic view from Parliament Hill. However, all appreciated the opportunity to get out and blow away the festive season cobwebs. Details [here](#).

**Woolwich to Rotherhithe:** having arrived on the Elizabeth Line we followed the Thames Path, South Bank route with pavements all the way, ie no mud! It was interesting to see the further developments since we last did this walk several years ago. It started as a cold crisp morning and hence we were glad to reach the warmth of the Cutty Sark pub for lunch. A pub full of history. It turned milder in the afternoon as we continued through Greenwich and then left the river cutting past Greenland Docks to end at Canada Waters. Details [here](#).

**Crystal Palace to Battersea:** a good group of around eleven (there were some early leavers and later arrivals), keen on blowing away those festive cobwebs, assembled to traverse south London. Our 10 mile walk took us from the heights of the Sydenham ridge at Crystal Palace, where we saw the vast footprint of the old Great Exhibition

building, down bit by bit towards the Thames. We passed through Sydenham Hill Wood, a remnant of the Great North Wood that once stretched from Croydon to New Cross, then through Dulwich Park, passing the Picture Gallery and the elegant courtyard of Dulwich College, then on to Brockwell Park where we took a coffee break while watching brave swimmers take a freezing dip in the open air Lido. From there, we crossed the broad expanse of Clapham Common which stretches for over a mile, then down again to Battersea Park, with its sub-tropical gardens and lake, before reaching our destination, the recently opened and spectacular development of Battersea Power Station and a hearty late lunch. As north Londoners, it was good to see how all these southern suburbs fit together! Details [here](#).

**Canary Wharf to Rotherhithe:** A blowy drizzly start failed to deter our hardy bunch of walkers from enjoying this comprehensive trail through Docklands north and south. Both sides of the river teem with historical interest and some current building projects are giving tantalising glimpses of future parks and wildlife projects. Heading northwards via various waterways, diversions and St Katherine's Dock, we crossed the river at Tower Bridge to head southwards. Lunch was at the riverside Salt Quay pub which was fine apart from food being exceedingly slow to arrive. After lunch we continued along the river until diverting inland to Russia Dock Woodland. Unlike many of the other docks on our route which have now become boating marinas or ornamental waterways, here in the 70/80s, several docks were filled in and this excellent woodland and ecological park created. At its centre is Stave Hill, a tall artificial conical mound topped with a wonderful relief model of the area as it once was, and great views to Canary Wharf and the City. Our next stop was Greenland Dock which remains as a marina, water sports and recreational area and is navigable to the Thames — confirmed to us as we were hurried across a road bridge just before it was raised to let a boat go through. From there via Surrey Quays we continued through Southwark Park and the Ada Salter Garden to finish at Rotherhithe station. Details [here](#).

**Guildford:** We left Guildford in thick mist walking west climbing up the Hog's Back via its dramatic ridge with zero views due to the mist. However, by noon the mist had disappeared and we had extensive views over hills and valleys. It was also remarkably less muddy than expected because we were high and walked towards Compton over green pastures and a few little country lanes. Had an excellent lunch in the smart but casual The Withies Inn, at least in our bar area, before heading eastwards towards the river Wey, again over good dryish paths. A pleasant walk following the river north got us back into Guildford around 3.15pm, where some of us had tea at the station's Costa. A good country walk as opposed to the recent urban walks with hard surfaces and no extensive horizon views. Details [here](#).

## February

**Osterley to Harrow on the Hill:** a tour of the puddles of the west London green belt after two days of heavy rain, though the weather was mostly kind on the day. Eleven of us explored Osterley Park, with its grand Georgian country house, then followed the Brent river and its linear park north for 2½ miles, much of it wooded and lined with weeping plum trees in delicate blossom. We passed under Brunel's magnificent GWR Wharncliffe Viaduct and later via Perivale Park to the vast Railway Hotel at Greenford for an efficiently served lunch. From there we continued through a new beaver reserve at Horsenden Hill (no sightings but their trails in evidence) then a steady climb through Sudbury Hill to picturesque Harrow on the Hill with its school and beautiful parish church. Details [here](#).

**Sevenoaks:** we had very good, almost spring-like weather for this walk, though the path was much muddier in places than it had been, when tested 10 days before. However, all 16 enjoyed it very much. The round trip route is fairly straightforward and well used, by both walkers and horses, hence the mud, after recent rain. We had one new member, and another who left after lunch, hopefully finding his way to a bus stop

at Shipbourne. We saw plenty of deer in Knole Park, later passed through lavender fields, then negotiated tree clearance works outside Ightham Mote, before reaching the cafe for lunch. This was quite busy because of the half term holiday, but there was plenty of room, since it was warm enough to sit outside. Later we made good progress across the Greensand Way hills, before returning to Knole Park and Sevenoaks. Most of the group were able to catch a train back to London Bridge soon after 4.00, while a few of us found a café in Sevenoaks for tea and cake. Details [here](#).

**Great Chesterford to Newport:** Strong winds and rain failed to deter 5 hardy walkers from this very pleasant walk. Although the views were obscured by the weather, there were still welcome signs and sounds of spring from the clumps of snowdrops to the singing of skylarks and other songbirds. Lunch was in Saffron Walden, an attractive historic town which boasts 27 Grade II\* listed buildings. We made a quick visit to the huge parish church (completed 1525) its size reflecting the town's wealth at the height of the saffron trade, before heading to the 15th century Cross Keys pub for a very pleasant relaxed lunch. Unusually for a pub, this one incorporates its own traditional tea room (with a very tempting array of cakes). After lunch with rain and wind easing off as we walked through the Audley End Estate on good paths we decided not to take the early drop-out option. Naturally, after this the route started to become more muddy! As there are several ways to end the walk at Newport we decided to take the longer but less muddy route which increased our miles walked up to 11.65. Luckily there was just enough time for a takeaway tea from the 'about to close' tea shop before we arrived at the station in good time for the 4.15pm train. Details [here](#).

**Canvey Island Westside:** this was a just over 9 miles circular walk from Benfleet station. Details [here](#).

## March

**Broxbourne to Cheshunt:** this walk made a welcome change from the months of mud and rain. 8 miles on dry flat paths with even some sunshine. We passed water-filled gravel pits teeming with noisy terns, ducks, coots, swans and cormorants, interspersed with woodland areas showing early signs of spring. We alternated between the navigable Lee canal and the river Lea. Lunch in Waltham Abbey was either at the Gatehouse cafe or from Greggs after a pint in the local. The short return to Cheshunt station was via a different but still watery route. We covered the route in swift time and were back in Islington by 3.00pm. Details [here](#).

**Dollis Valley Path and Hampstead Heath:** this was chosen to try to find a relatively dry route underfoot. There were seven on this walk, which mostly avoided mud until a short section on Hampstead Heath in the afternoon. There was one shower which caused us to shelter for a few minutes. The old Bull and Bush was not particularly busy and provided good food to a reasonable timetable. An enjoyable walk which includes the striking central square at Hampstead Garden Suburb and took in the interior of Lutyens's large Anglican Church. Details [here](#).

**The Line and the Lee:** On a beautiful spring day marking the equinox, fourteen of us walked along the Greenwich meridian roughly. We started south of the Thames with an exploration of The Line, a sculpture trail with works by Antony Gormley, Tracey Emin and about 20 other artists. The first section, about a mile and a half, circumnavigates the Millennium Dome. We then crossed the Thames to follow the River Lea and Lee Navigation, starting at Cody Dock, where The Line continues as far as Stratford, passing the historic tidal mills at Three Mills on the way. From here we continued through the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and stopped for lunch by the canal opposite Hackney Wick. We continued to follow the towpath north as far as Springfield Park, then crossed into Walthamstow Wetlands, before reaching the end of our 9½ mile walk at Tottenham Hale. Details [here](#).

**Manningtree/Dedham:** This is the first time we've done this lovely Dedham Vale walk in spring and it was a treat to see the massed clouds of quickthorn in bloom

everywhere. Other highlights of this walk are the places and buildings around Flatford, associated with Constable and his paintings, and later the beautifully preserved village of Dedham. Due to the excessive rains this winter we saw lakes in places where lakes shouldn't be, but actually the going underfoot could have been a lot worse. The serious mud was generally in smallish patches and didn't need us to make any significant detours. The only change to the route was an impromptu decision to add a couple of extra miles of river walking before lunch a) taking advantage of the beautiful blue sky and sunshine b) because we'd have reached the pub too early! The Sun Inn lunch in Dedham was excellent. The much shorter afternoon walk saw the weather change to grey and windy, but still dry. All in all, a lovely and very enjoyable day out. Details [here](#).

## April

**Newhaven to Brighton:** Ten of us walked this coastal path starting with the harbour arm at Newhaven, a gentle climb to Castle Hill's (55m) coast watch station, passing a Victorian Fort, quiet White Cliffs, an undercliff path, Brighton's marina, busy promenades and boardwalks passing Brighton's pier, shops, cafes. During the whole walk we had nice sea views with a lovely morning sun but slightly more clouds in the afternoon. On the cliff top path was the Telscombe Tavern which served a good value hearty pub lunch. At Saltdean we joined the main undercliff path at the base of the white chalk cliffs, passing Rottingdean and the large but rather soulless Marina. Along the Brighton promenade the party split between beach walkers and promenaders reaching the train just before the heavens opened. Finally a good sunny, dry and mud-free day. Details [here](#).

**Moor Park to Stanmore:** Encouraging signs of spring with bluebells out and trees in early leaf for our 10 mile walk on the London Loop route from Moor Park to Stanmore. Undeterred by the mud 10 of us made it in good time despite rather slow service for lunch at the garden centre. Interesting features after lunch were the remains of Grim's Dyke, and the wooded estate of W.S. Gilbert, librettist for the G and S duo. Sadly he drowned in 1911 in his own lake trying to rescue a young woman house guest who had got into difficulties swimming. She survived and later became Stanley Spencer's second wife. Details [here](#).

**Colne Valley:** we all enjoyed this popular walk, helped by there being no mud and the sun shining. The lunch stop up the hill top gave us great views over the valley and we could see how HS2 had progressed since we last visited. Some stayed on at the end in Uxbridge for tea. Details [here](#).

**Green Link, Hackney to Peckham:** On a dry, but windy and chilly day, this 10 mile urban walk took eleven of us briskly along two thirds of TFL's new route across central London, from Hackney to Peckham Rye. From Hackney Town Hall we crossed London Fields, then via De Beauvoir. Here we diverted slightly from the official route to follow the Regent's Canal and the final part of the New River walk to Sadler's Wells. Continuing through Clerkenwell, Postman's Park and St Paul's Churchyard, we crossed the Wobbly Bridge to our lunch stop at the Thames-side Founder's Arms. The second half took us through some impressive recent streetscape and park improvements by Southwark council, including the brand new Elephant Park. Finally we traced the attractive route of the long defunct Grand Surrey Canal through Burgess Park and a linear park, all very fresh and green with flowering trees and meadow plants, down to the cultural hub at Peckham Square. Details [here](#).

## May

**Chorleywood to Chesham:** This was a great walk in the Chilterns at the best time of year. An abundance of birdsong, spring flowers in the hedgerows and, luckily for us, the weather partly confounding the forecasters. A lovely sunny morning soon saw us shedding layers to enjoy the unexpected warm temperatures. We had a very good, reasonably priced lunch at the walker-friendly pub at Ley Hill before setting off again

into somewhat cloudier conditions. Eventually the rain caught up with us for a short spell before we reached the outskirts of Chesham, where we followed the Chess Valley path to the town centre and station. Details [here](#).

**Dovedale:** this was our 'extra' extended walking weekend. Full report [here](#). Credit to Jo-Ann for the photos.

**Couldson (Farthing Down/Happy Valley):** A perfect May Day for this 9 mile walk through meadows of wild flowers, and woodland still showing a last blooming of bluebells. We sat outside for lunch at the Fox, which was tasty, and finished the walk in good time with tea and ice cream in the park near the station. Of the 13 walkers, about half had not done it before and particularly enjoyed it. Details [here](#).

**Speldhurst:** This was a successful 11 mile walk, enjoyed by a group of 13, despite drizzle from the start, followed by heavy rain, which persisted for about an hour just after we reached Groombridge Place, fortunately beyond the muddiest section. We had walked through attractive countryside, including Friezland Wood, after which we passed High Rocks. From Groombridge there was a stiff climb, followed by more open countryside and woodland, before we reached Wealdway and eventually Speldhurst, after nearly 8 miles, where we had a late lunch in the George and Dragon. Here we were very well looked after, having in most cases pre-ordered food and kept them informed about our arrival time. The walk back to Tunbridge Wells was straightforward, through woodland and Rusthall and Tunbridge Wells Commons. Some had to get the train back to London Bridge straightaway, while others enjoyed a stroll through "The Pantiles". Details [here](#).

**Bayford and Hertford:** we returned to part of the Hertfordshire Chain Walk but with a section of the Hertfordshire Way as well. Although it rained all day it was deemed a good walk with varying countryside. The first part was on the Hertfordshire Way, alongside the railway line, with some tree cover. This took us to the outskirts of Hertford where we picked up the old Cole Green railway line, now a walk and cycle route, and headed west. This led us to Letty Green and the pub. The last time we had been here was in the days of Covid and social distancing requirements. Now we appreciated being indoors and a chance to dry out a bit. After lunch we turned south along link 4 of the Chain Walk back to Bayford. Details [here](#).

**Enfield Chase and around:** Eight of us took a walk largely through open countryside and woods yet still within Greater London, only a short tube ride to Cockfosters from Islington. The unsettled weather the few days before miraculously cleared and remained very pleasant. Initially following the London Loop, we tracked through dense woodland in Trent Country park, before turning north into Enfield Chase, which is undergoing a major woodland restoration project. The meadows are incredibly lush this year, with giant buttercups and cow parsley 3m high. We then turned away from the Loop, north to Whitewebbs Park, a heavily wooded area with a fair bit of mud underfoot after the previous rain. For our lunch stop some of us went to an old country pub, the King and Tinker, while others stopped by a small lake in the woods and were entertained by the many waterfowl\* with their young. To finish the walk, we continued to Forty Hall, with its lovely gardens, then through Hilly Fields Park to Gordon Hill for the train home. Details [here](#).

\*A local birder came by and identified a mandarin duck with her 6 ducklings that he said had been ringed in Battersea Park a few years earlier (he identified it from the ring serial no) but had been nesting here for the last 2 years. The rather splendid male was also present, as well as coots, mallards and a cormorant.

## June

**Wrabness to Manningtree:** A warm and pleasant day saw 11 of us set out from the small station of Wrabness on the Stour estuary to follow the Essex Way to Manningtree. Almost immediately after leaving the station we passed Grayson Perry's House for

Essex. The golden roof covering has weathered down to more subtle tones in the 10 years since it first shone out across the landscape. A short walk from the house and we were on the Essex Way, with great views of the imposing Royal Hospital School on the Suffolk side of the river. Due to a lack of pubs in the area, we had a late lunch at the Crown in Manningtree, which proved to be an excellent choice, nice location and very good food. Seven of us continued on the post prandial walk, along a very well maintained riverside path, until we hit a long, extremely overgrown section with chest high nettles, brambles and other vegetation. Needless to say, that was the only part of the walk that hadn't been walked recently. Details [here](#).

**Tewin, Hertfordshire Chain Walk:** we last did this walk in December 2020 under Covid restrictions so it was good to re-visit this area and include a pub visit this time! Although finding a pub open on Mondays gets harder. We started from Bayford station picking up Link 4 (the east side, which we didn't do two weeks ago) heading north to the Cole Green disused railway. We crossed over to pick up Link 5 and into the large Panshanger Park heading toward Tewin for our late pub lunch, The Plume of Feathers being the only one open on Mondays. After lunch we turned south picking up Link 5 again back toward the Cole Green disused railway line. Some elected for the shorter direct route to Hertford North. Others opted to add 1½ miles to cut down to Hertingfordbury and then back along the Cole Green railway to Hertford North station (making it just over 13 miles). Details [here](#).

**Welwyn Garden City:** Blessed with perfect walking weather and gloriously green countryside 11 of us enjoyed this circular walk. Red kites and skylarks were around. A perfectly timed lunch stop at the Brocket Arms was an additional delight with outdoor seating and good food. The train home was waiting at the station for us when we arrived back. All in all, nothing to complain about! Details [here](#).

**Wendover and the Chilterns:** On a splendid June day, eight of us took a nine mile walk from Wendover. Steadily climbing through shady beech woods following the ancient Ridgeway, we paused to take in the magnificent wide view from Coombe Hill, with its obelisk commemorating the Boer War. We continued south passing through the Chequers estate, with good views of the PM's country residence, then on through more woodland and a nature reserve to a welcome lunch stop at the Plough at Cadsden. Having cooled down a little — temperatures were now in the high 20s — we returned by a lower more direct route through the pretty village of Ellesborough, then across farmland to return to Wendover. Details [here](#).

## July

**Watton at Stone:** Last walked in May 2021 we returned to complete links 6 and 7 of the Hertfordshire Chain Walk. We did it as a figure of eight. Weather was a bit poor considering the time of year but there was good rolling Hertfordshire countryside with a mix of open vistas and woodland. Excellent pub grub also. Easy completion after lunch in good time for the easy train journey back to Islington. Details [here](#).

**Eridge:** A very pleasant walk across the gently undulating terrain of the High Weald on the East Sussex/ Kent border. In spite of a rather gloomy weather forecast, 13 hardy walkers weren't deterred and were rewarded with a mere sprinkling of light rain. The Crown Inn at Old Groombridge provided substantial portions of good food to set us up for the longer part of the walk after lunch. It was interesting to see the great sandstone outcrops at Harrison's Rocks and Eridge, which were quite unlike the landscapes found on most of our walks. The lengthy narrow footpath by Harrison's turned out to be rather more exciting than just 'tall vegetation (mostly bracken)' as the recent heavy rain had brought out the brambles and stingers in full tall force! A pick-up of pace towards the end of the walk was necessary in order to catch the 4.50 train, so no time to enjoy the beer garden at the pub next to the station. Details [here](#).

**Willesden to Islington, Summer Social:** we had 28 'shows' for this event. 17 started but some dropped on the way, to be offset by others joining. Then we had a few who



could just join us at the pub at the end. Of course many of our regular walkers were there but it was good to see two new 'first timers' and some 'ex' returners. It was a very hot day, but we had some shade on the towpaths and it was interesting to see developments in many parts of London since we last did this walk in 2019. We were all glad to reach Canonbury Tavern for refreshments and sustenance. We had the pomp and ceremony of the award of our Group Cup, this year going to Alison for 'Video Services' (the 10th year of our annual awards). Details [here](#).

**Leigh to Penshurst:** Perfect weather for 15 of us for this walk through the river Medway valley. A peaceful meander through woods, parkland, meadows and grazing fields passing some beautiful old houses. Lunch in the garden of the delightful ancient Rock Inn at Hoath Corner and an opportunity for further refreshment at the Little Brown Jug at Penshurst station. Details [here](#).

## August

**Crews Hill:** Hot and humid conditions for the 11 of us heading off from Crews Hill station to Goff's Oak, on a tried and tested walk through golf course, woodland park and open countryside, crossing the M25. Welcome cool-down and lunch at Goff's Oak pub after two thirds of the walk. Then two took the direct road to Cuffley station, while the rest of us negotiated an overgrown path, emerging back into farmland, with its 'goldilocks' cottage, and finally passing through multiple garden centres, just in time to get the 3.25pm train back from Crews Hill. Details [here](#).

**Epping Forest:** On a fine August day very suitable for walks, twelve of us made a 10+ mile north-south traverse of this ancient royal hunting forest. Starting through Bell Common on the edge of Epping village itself, we followed rides through the dense beech and oak woods, where a herd of deer crossed right in front of us. Along the way we passed: Amblesbury Banks, the large iron age fort reputed to be the site of Boudicca's last stand; High Beech where the church had been co-opted for location filming; the famous Original Tea Hut; a number of ponds and small lakes; then the cafe next to the 16th century Queen Elizabeth's hunting lodge, where we stopped for lunch. Most of us continued south for the final few miles beside the (dried out) River Ching and through more open meadows and a golf course, before reaching Woodford Green and our final destination. Details [here](#).

**Welwyn North to Welwyn Garden City:** a good choice of walk for a hot sunny day, with plenty of shady paths and woods en route. In spite of early train delays we managed to arrive in reasonably good time for lunch at the White Horse, Burnham Green. The pub has a nice beer garden (with shade) and the swift service was appreciated by our large group of 17 walkers. After the easy drop-out point mid afternoon, 14 carried on along more cool wooded paths to end in central Welwyn Garden City. Before heading to the station a few of us diverted to Megan's (the Islington branch of which hosts regular iu3a coffee mornings) for teas, ices, aperol spritz and a chance to relax and cool down. Details [here](#).

**Tring to Wendover:** This 13+ mile walk took us through varied countryside, from canal paths to wetlands, from fields of crops to wooded hills. Highlights included the tranquil banks of the Grand Union Canal, with branches overhead dangling blackberries just out of reach; a black swan on Startops End reservoir, and a fisherman on Tringford reservoir using an already-hooked perch as bait for pike. Bright red, mossy galls on a dog rose caught our eye, caused by the larvae of the tiny gall wasp. We found a sheela na gig on the wall of All Saints Church, Buckland, reputedly one of only 30 in England. After lunch at The Oak pub in Aston Clinton we spotted a huge red kite perched on a roof. As we delved into woodland that was part of the old Halton House estate, ripe damsons provided dessert. We saw crayfish in the Wendover Arm. Finally, we ascended into Wendover Woods, where the Chiltern Forestry Commission has created an attractive outdoor activity centre, and then made our way down a steep, chalky path, a view of Coombe Hill to our left, into Wendover for the journey home. Details [here](#).

**Roydon to Sawbridgeworth:** 13 of us did this lovely 12 mile walk in perfect weather, mainly through gently rolling Hertfordshire and Essex countryside, either along tracks and green lanes or quiet country roads, featuring cereal fields, woods and waterways, the best of which were stretches of the River Ash in the morning and of the Stort Navigation near the end. En route we stopped occasionally to do some foraging — always a summer delight — of Mirabelles and blackberries, both super ripe and juicy. After 8+ miles we went through the gates of the Henry Moore Sculpture Park and admired some of his majestic Reclining Nudes and other sculptures — from our lunch tables — nicely dotted around the lawn. A gastro cafe served us delicious club sandwiches and generous salads with crayfish or salt beef but no alcohol; just as well because we had another 4 miles to go from Perry Green to our station in Sawbridgeworth. Two members stayed behind to do some more in-depth visiting of the Moore sculptures and studios since it's not an easy place to get to without a car. The second part was more agricultural land and a small bit of suburban Sawbridgeworth and then the sprawling village itself heading towards the station where we caught the 4.03pm thanks to the excellent pace that the group kept throughout without it becoming a route march. Details [here](#).

## September

**Tring:** Continuing recent Chilterns walks, from Tring we passed through the pretty village of Aldbury before a long climb to the Bridgewater Monument and on through extensive beech woodland, mysterious in early autumn mist. Miraculously the mist lifted and the sun burst through as we climbed up to Ivinghoe Beacon with its magnificent 360 degree views. We then followed the Ridgeway turning down to the village of Ivinghoe for our pub lunch. From there we walked through the attractive village, with its old windmill, before climbing again to the Ridgeway and through more beech woods at Aldbury Nowers, taking us back to Tring station. Details [here](#).

**Pitsea to Leigh-on-Sea:** this was a return to the Thames Estuary Path, a straightforward 8½ mile walk through many nature reserves. We were lucky with the weather giving us great views over the estuary from Hadleigh Castle. Details [here](#).

**Berkhamsted:** a Chilterns walk, this time through Berkhamsted Common to the Ashridge estate and the Bridgewater monument cafe for lunch. After lunch, we headed down through the woods to Aldbury Common and on to Dudswell from where we followed the Grand Union Canal path back to Berkhamsted. Details [here](#).

**Berkhamsted to Great Gaddesden:** another walk in the Chilterns, with 8 of us setting off from Berkhamsted across valleys and ridges to the little village of Great Gaddesden, with its attractive church, then up and around Gaddesden Place to the Crown & Sceptre at Briden's Camp for lunch, where we were looked after very well. Remarkably the weather was mostly good after the previous day's deluge, of which there were many signs, including the closure of the golf course, which we crossed twice. This proved an enjoyable and satisfying 11 mile walk, with its alternating woods, fields, and extensive views. We returned to Berkhamsted by 4.00pm, for the train back to Euston. Details [here](#).

**Church Stretton, Extended Walking Weekend:** weekend's report [here](#). Details [here](#).

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



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

[Details.](#)