



# Rambling On

SPRING EDITION

Feb 2022 - Apr 2022

*Interesting, informative and fun – walk reports, articles, club news and great pictures*

## Chairman's Message

Ramblers are used to sheep, horses, bullocks and bulls in fields, even llamas and alpacas. Now we read that emus and black swans engage our pathways and the effects of Storm Eunice we see inconveniently hindering our progress. Seems we have all turned to be zoology sleuths, with an appreciation also of red and grey squirrels.

In our new warmer world our walking experiences are changing. We now have serried ranks of vineyards to walk through where all the nice old biodiversity-rich orchards have been grubbed out. Fewer little owls now. In a few areas gates have been erected to replace stiles but in others stiles are a

time-waster to progress. All the same, walking the 1066 Country Walk or Powdermill Woods is still enjoyable. We learn of missed walks, rendezvous lost – we all have done it – and of enjoyable evening walks. If you want to get knotted, all the skills are provided here.

There is plenty of fascinating historical information in this edition, for instance on the successive Johns of Ashburnham in the 17th and 18th century, though not exactly titled like that.

*John Feltwell (the 40th) from Feltwell, Norfolk!  
Or Johannes de Feltewelle (no wonder I always wear wellies)*

## TWENTY EIGHT NAVIGATE EIGHT STILES IN STYLE

13 February 2022  
Northiam Circular  
Report by Audrey

It was wonderful to see so many keen ramblers turn out for February's Northiam walk but the very welcome high numbers did pose a bit of a walk-leader challenge. How to get 28 people swiftly over a run of eight stiles, in a section of the walk that's only 0.2 miles – a distance that should only take 10 minutes without stiles – so the ramble doesn't take all day!

Added to that, there were safety issues at the start and end of the short eight-stile gauntlet. The first being no space to gather once across the road – the A28 no less!. Plus, it was a double stile, so a slow, cumbersome process to traverse. The last stile, once over it, resulted in a short drop to the road which needed to be crossed immediately, with poor viability to do so.



But I had a plan! It did mean my having to be somewhat authoritarian for that short section, organising ramblers into crossing groups, marshalled strictly by my middle and back markers. But seems all was forgiven, judging by the positive comments at the end of which turned out to be a glorious walk. Thank you all who attended!

22 February 2022

## Beckley Circular

Report by June

### JUNE FINDS MISTLETOE, EMUS, BLACK SWANS, A FAIRY TREE AND A WILD FLOWER MEADOW ON HER EVENTFUL BECKLEY WALK

The morning dawned gloriously bright and sunny, ideal for a 6.5 mile ramble. True to recent form, 29 Battle Ramblers gathered in good time for a 10am start. Housekeeping first, who had at least one plaster in their rucksack? Not many, I hope this will be a lesson learned.

The walk had been provided by Lynne George, who said, "I might not walk with you very often but I feel I have done my bit." Thank you Lynne for the recce, I would have found it difficult without your help.

I decided to split the groups into two, with Rowly as my co-leader – Alison as my back-marker, with Brenda as Rowly's. My reasoning for the split was that there were a lot of walkers, lots of interesting things to stop and look at, seven stiles quite close together and a number of single track paths in the first few miles.



The first interesting sight was the abundance of mistletoe before we even set off. A magnificent ball of it had come down via Storm Eunice on February 18th. Bev gave us a lesson on how to graft the berry on to an apple tree, while John took some photos, ensuring that nobody's shadow was included.



Less than a mile on, a 'fairy tree' in the middle of a field had fallen (Storm Eunice again). The roots had been completely torn away by the weight of it (a big, old oak).



Further on, we came across two very inquisitive but friendly emus, the second tallest bird after the ostrich.



In the next field, a rare sight of three black swans. On my recce with Lynne, there were actually seven of them (see above), so I am hoping the others were nesting and we will see them another time.

We stopped for our break in a glorious, sunny glade, soaking up the sunshine. On the second half of the walk, we did not split into groups as the paths were more open and everyone had settled into their natural pace of walking. The next few fields took us over Sir Paul McCartney's land, which included his late wife Linda's wild flower meadow, which Lynne says is beautiful in early summer. We also went through Flatropers Wood, which is famous for wild boar but we didn't see any.

### 20 March 2022 Pett Level and Winchelsea Circular – Taking a break



## THE ASHBURNHAM ESTATE: A TALE OF JOHNS (MAINLY)

Article by Terry Milford

### Part 3: THE GLORY YEARS, 17th and 18th centuries

On the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, John Ashburnham regained his full liberty and recovered his former position as Groom of the Bedchamber, receiving such rewards for his loyalty to the crown as the impoverished treasury could afford. Charles II remained very grateful for the help John had given his father. His debts were written off and he became MP for Sussex.

He and his younger brother William then set about rebuilding and improving the mansion and church at Ashburnham. Both brothers had bought land to add to the estate whenever possible, often with monies from beneficial marriages and by 1670 the holding was extensive. John died in 1670 and, as his son William had died in 1665 of the plague, he was succeeded by his grandson whose name was – John. This John continued the tradition of profiting from marriage by wedding Bridget, daughter and heir to Walter Vaughan of Brecknockshire, in 1677 and thus acquiring large estates in Wales.

The status of the families is demonstrated by the wedding being at Westminster Abbey. John continued the involvement in public life championed by his grandfather, though he was less skilled. He was MP for Hastings for 3 periods of 2 years each between 1679 to 1689 and held other offices such as Baron of the Cinque Ports. Throughout this period the Ashburnhams remained nominally Catholic though this John was much more ambivalent about it than his devout grandfather.

Neither Charles II or James II seemed to have any problems with this as their form of Protestantism verged on Catholicism. Nevertheless, the Church of England rituals had to be adhered to by its head. John assisted in holding the canopy over James II at his coronation in 1685 in a C of E service that his grandfather would never have been involved with. He performed a similar service for the much more radically Protestant William and Mary in 1689.

He had wearied of James who was almost universally disliked and welcomed the new regime, having no

qualms in thenceforth being openly Protestant. His welcome must have been appreciated for in 1689 he was awarded a baronetcy.

John died in 1710 and was succeeded by his son, amazingly called William, second baron. He too had married an heiress and considerably enhanced the family estates. No good could come of being named William however and both he and his wife died in 1710 leaving his younger brother to carry on as third baron.

Things were back to the stability of having a John at the head of the family. This John added military status to the family prestige and standing. He was a Colonel in the Horse Guards to 1715, then Lord of the Prince of Wales Bedchamber and Yeoman of the Guard from 1731 to his death in 1737. He must certainly have made a mark as in 1730 he was created Earl of Ashburnham and Viscount of St. Asaph. The first Earl Ashburnham.

John was succeeded by John, his son, second earl and fourth baron. He had been born in 1724 and survived until 1812. A very long life for the times. He occupied a number of esoteric, strangely named posts at the royal court, most of which were ceremonial and required no real work, for example, Master of the Great Wardrobe. He was however, Lord Lieutenant of Sussex and a Privy Councillor and appeared to be on quite intimate terms with George III.

Unlike his predecessors, this John seems to have made a conscious decision that he and the family should be leading lights in society with awesome repute and prestige. Whilst wealth continued to accumulate, indeed he too married an heiress, he was more than willing to spend some of the vast fortune on enhancing the property and thereby the standing of the dynasty.

Ashburnham Place was completely rebuilt between 1757 and 1763 and stocked with artworks from all over Europe. The Ashburnham collection was built over the years to become one of the most highly regarded in the country. Lancelot (Capability) Brown was engaged to remodel and landscape the grounds. This was carried out between 1767 and 1781 and it is generally

... continued from previous page

thought included the construction of the lakes in front of the house though some believe that these originated as furnace ponds associated with the iron industry interests of the family.

Meanwhile, the Enclosures Act was passed in 1773 making it easy for landowners to seize common or tenanted land for their own use. John secured an Enclosure which enabled him to construct a six mile long private carriage road for his and his family's personal use from Ashburnham to Vine Hall Street. Here it connected to the Hastings to Flimwell turnpike which had opened in 1753 as part of the nationwide boom in turnpike construction.

The Turnpike Act of 1766 had made it compulsory for commercial turnpikes to have milestones and though under no obligation, John installed 5 along his road to keep up with the big boys as befitted his standing.

An impressive entrance lodge was built by Robert Adam in 1785 where this road enters the estate. This stands on Penhurst Lane just off the A271 North Trade Road. This truly was the heyday of the Ashburnham estate though things were to continue in good vein for some time to come.

*If you missed the previous two parts to this great tale just ask Brenda for back copies of Rambling On. The final part will be in the Summer Issue.*

27 March 2022

## Appledore to Kenardington Church and Return

Report by Simon

The walk started at the later time of 10.15am, this being one of the walks furthest away from Battle. Thirteen people attended, which is low compared with current walk numbers. However, it was refreshing to lead a smaller group. The walk started from the public car park and proceeded along the length of Appledore High Street, turning left before the church to head out along the Military Canal. The weather was dry, with little wind and the skies cleared during the walk to give us a touch of sun.



The walk along the canal was obviously flat but enjoyable, being tree-lined, with views out over Romney Marsh to the right and rolling vine-planted

hills to the left. A few trees had been blown down by the recent storm but were easy to pass.

After around two miles, we reached the bridge and turned left up a



gentle hill to Kenardington church. The church is on the site of an ancient fort, built to repel the Danes. Unfortunately, they arrived before the fort was completed and overran it in 892AD before establishing themselves in Appledore. The church is thought to have originally been wooden, later replaced by a larger stone-built church. The tower dates from 1170 AD with an unusual round tower attached to allow access to the belfry. It was built a long way from the village to afford quarantine during the Plague. We were lucky to gain access to it this time and had an enjoyable refreshment break with views.

The walk proceeded next through the Gusbourne vineyards. They produce high quality white wine and champagne from Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier grapes. The vineyard is well-kept and extensive. From the vineyard, we passed a beacon, which displays plaques added each year to celebrate the Armistice, and then up a man-made hill to get a great view of the surrounding countryside. From here, it is an easy walk down the hill, across the playing fields and back to the car park. We adjourned to the pub for a well-earned drink.

## EVENING WALKS COMMENCE IN APRIL

1 April 2022

Telham Lane and Powdermill



A great sign on route

8 April 2022

**Powdermill Revisited**

Report by Bernard

Sixteen walkers and 3 dogs assembled on the Abbey Green for the second Friday evening walk of the season. Although rain had been forecast, none actually fell that day in Battle and the walk was completed in dry conditions with even a bit of sunshine during it. After leaving the Abbey, we took the 1066 path toward Catsfield, passing through clumps of flowering gorse on The Stumblets. We followed the bridleway for a while then branched off to the left across a field to enter the eastern end of Powdermill Wood, where there was evidence of chestnut coppicing.

Powdermill Wood is a privately owned working woodland and the forester lives on site in a house he built after purchasing the wood from the Abbey Estate. He is tolerant of walkers and many dog walkers use the wood, although some sections of it are not available for operational reasons. Entering the nature

reserve, managed by the Powdermill Trust, we crossed the boardwalk over the swampy area with marsh marigolds in flower amidst the clumps of tussock sedge grass on one side and a carpet of golden saxifrage on the other.

From the nature reserve, we returned to the public footpath and climbed the steep path. Here we did a loop through the wood to where it borders with Powdermill House, which is under separate ownership. Heading west, we passed through the small car park and through the wood yard where chestnut fencing etc. is prepared. The path then took us to the Catsfield end of the wood where the occasional fallen tree bore witness to the recent storms. In one or two places the tops of pine trees had been ripped off such has been the strength of the wind. A convenient spot was found for a short refreshment stop and a natter and then we completed our tour of the wood coming out where the 1066 path meets with the Farthing Farm track. A leisurely stroll took us back through the sweet smelling gorse bushes to Battle Abbey

## THE (RED) SQUIRREL PUB – an historical perspective

Article by Dr John Feltwell and Terry Milford

We are all familiar with The Squirrel Inn in Battle on the edge of Catsfield. Well it must have been named after the red squirrel rather than the 'North American tree rat' otherwise known as the grey squirrel. This invasive pest was introduced in about the 1870 and has since ousted the reds in the south and through England up to about Newcastle upon Tyne. In the south reds are now only seen on the Isle of Wight, Brownsea Island and the Scilly Isles (introduced).



The first mention of the Squirrel Farm was in 1640, so it must have been named after the reds since it would have been 200 years later that greys escaped into the countryside.

We can all imagine the countryside around Battle 300 years ago. There would have been many more oak woodlands and hedgerows and the red squirrel would have been everywhere, collecting nuts and messing with the thatch – a more colourful mammal than what

we see today. As a native species in the UK reds would have been around since before 1066. Are they on the Bayeux Tapestry?

After 1066, the land The Squirrel is on was part of the Battle Abbey domain. This was bounded on the west by the Normanhurst Estate (over the track to Catsfield) and on the north by the Ashburnham Estate (over the North Trade Road). Both of these estates are listed in the Domesday Book.

The land across the North Trade Road is now the Beeches Estate, having been purchased from the Ashburnhams in 1946 by the Wills family, who still live at Beeches Farm. Any connection to the tobacco trade is not known.

After the dissolution in the late 1530s, the Abbey lands were sequestered and sold off. Sometime later a farmstead was established known as Squirrel Farm. The first record of this is 1640 and the farmhouse still stands, just along the road from The Squirrel Inn, towards Battle. It seems that this developed into quite a large and spread out farming community, although only the farmhouse and the inn now survive as constituent buildings.

The building that is now The Squirrel Inn was constructed in the 1840s. It was possibly an ale house for the farming community from the start but may have been a dwelling. The first mention of it as a licenced premises is 1886 when it was reported that the hunt met there. It was certainly much smaller than now being just the two rooms where the bar is now. It has been much extended at various times on all sides.

Built too late for the coach trade it seems always to have been a roadhouse but it is distinguished as always surviving independently and never becoming a tied house. For many years its defining trade was as a staging post for animals being driven to Battle market from outlying districts along the North Trade Road. It was surrounded by stock pens and drovers would rest up overnight, before producing their animals fresh, rested and in top condition at market the next morning.

10 April 2022

## Battle Circular Taking in Sedlescombe and Battle Great Wood

Report by Peter B

It was a lovely sunny day and the turn-out reflected this, with 32 people joining us. We decided, ahead of the walk, to remind members of the dangers of crossing the A21 and that we would do so in small groups. The walk took us through fields and lanes well known to some Battle Ramblers, past the Equestrian Centre and, after crossing the A21, right up towards the metal-gated route to Sedlescombe before embarking on the return leg of the walk.

Shortly after the second crossing of the A21, we stopped for lunch, walking past a shire horse and its foal and on to a grass verge facing a field of sheep and lambs. It wasn't until the last third of the walk that we actually went through Battle Great Wood, along some muddy spiralling lanes before heading upwards towards a large pathway flanked by tall firs. We took a sharp right turn and eventually came out across a



country road back into Battle and the final uphill stretch to the car park.

All seemed to enjoy the walk and several commented that the route took them through parts they had not previously walked. It was a pleasure leading such a nice walk on such a sunny day. A few of us stopped at Battle Brewery for a pint of ale and to toast Chairman John's birthday the previous day.

## APRIL EVENING WALK

22 April 2022

### St Helens Wood & Old Roar Ghyll



## MEMORY CORNER

*A brief recollection of some memorable (to some anyway) incidents of failed link-ups, identified by Margaret and David*

As with most walkers, we have from time-to-time failed to link up with the main group. Way back in 2006, when we had only been Battle Ramblers for a short while, we went out to Battle station to join a Battle circular walk. We found that BR time-keeping was very prompt and the group had set out bang on 10am.

We waved frantically from our car, as we went down the approach to the station, hoping to attract attention but, being new to the Club in those days, we weren't recognised. The group must have thought 'why are those idiots waving at us? We parked and changed as quickly as we could, thinking we would catch up with the party on the main road but, at the top of Station Road, there was no trace of any of them and we had no idea which of several routes they had taken. We reluctantly gave up and went home.

On a later occasion, the rendezvous for a Kent walk was Lydd. As we know, there are two Lydds, the town itself and Lydd-on-sea. We thought we were in the right area by choosing the latter but, after a recce up and down the coastal road from Dungeness almost as far as Greatstone-on-sea, we were beginning to doubt it. After a quick look in Lydd town itself, we decided to call it a day and had a pleasant walk at Rye Harbour instead, by coincidence bumping into a couple of Battle Ramblers doing their own walk, although not in the same circumstances as us.

Scotney Castle was the venue for the next mishap. This time we became lost with the then Chairman, the late Jim Jones and his wife, Brenda – no less. We somehow got detached from the main party in the woods surrounding Scotney. It was easy to do in the days when there were no back-markers. Jim opted to go and look for a re-connection with the main party but,

after a good 20 minutes, we were beginning to wonder whether Jim, himself, had become lost. Eventually, he returned to say he had located the leader and followers a short distance away. "Have you had your refreshments?" one asked. "No," we replied, "we've been busy searching for you." By the time we had found them they were ready to move on. From memory, it was after this incident that Battle Ramblers decided to adopt back-markers for all walks.

Our final example involves a town walk. There were three of us and this time there was a back-marker, who might just have momentarily neglected his duties. It was in the St.Helen's Park, Hastings area and, suddenly, without knowing how it had happened we were on our own. We looked around, there was Waterman's Close, Ewhurst Close, St.Helen's Park Road and Langham Road – all nearby. Which one did the main party take? We never found out until much later on. The only thing to do was to head for the cafe in Alexandra Park, where an end-of-walk meet-up had been proposed and, at last, we became re-connected, with great relief, for a welcome cup of coffee.

We think the main cause of our becoming detached was a hairpin bend, on which we three lagged behind and, by the time we were around it, the party had disappeared along a passageway with a high fence on each side and thus could not be noticed by us. As indicated, the back-marker had not been looking out for us and making sure we did take the passageway instead of keeping to the road, which we did.

The lessons for all of this is to make sure you have a reliable back-marker and, if you are walking at the back of a group, make sure you keep in touch with the last person you can see in front of you.

## SAVE THE DATES!

### 2022 Forthcoming Special Diary Dates

**24 July**  
Strawberry Cream Tea

**10 - 18 September**  
High Weald Walking Festival

**23 October**  
Battle Ramblers AGM

## CLUB NEWS

### BATTLE RAMBLERS LOSES ONE OF ITS MOST RESPECTED MEMBERS

*– a tribute to Maureen Harrison by her good friend and another Battle Ramblers stalwart – Jean Smith*

Maureen passed away on March 10th after a two-year battle with cancer, bravely borne.

She joined Battle Ramblers in 1987 and was a regular walker for many years, a cheerful and chatty companion, but not liking the rain! A group of us, including Maureen, used to have an annual holiday in October when we would walk long-distance paths and she particularly liked the Lake District and Yorkshire. We later joined the West Sussex Festival of Walks and covered many miles in that area.

Maureen had an interesting life, becoming a nurse specialising in midwifery. She and her friend, Mavis, went to Australia as £10 Poms and she had a varied career, including being involved at one time with the Flying Doctor service.

On returning home, she joined the RAF nursing service and had postings home and abroad, including to Bahrain. She met and married Ron and, on leaving the RAF, they took up posts as bursar and nurse at Abingdon, then Shrewsbury schools before retiring to Sedlescombe. She joined local societies and played



*Maureen with her holiday rambling pals – pictured left to right: Kathleen Honeysett (Honey); Gladys King; Lindsay Mabon; Maureen Harrison; and Jean Smith*

tennis and, particularly, bowls. More recently, she joined the Battle Walking for Health group, where she met other walkers who could now only walk shorter distances. She was a keen viewer of sports on TV and woe betide anyone who suggested an outing during Wimbledon fortnight!

A good friend, who will be sadly missed – sleep well.

NB. 15 members of Battle Ramblers attended Maureen's funeral on March 30th at Hastings Crematorium.



**BACKPACK SNACKS – one from the archives**

**Honey's Banana Cake**

Ingredients:

- 8oz butter
- 4oz sugar
- 2 large ripe bananas
- some chocolate chips
- 10oz self-raising flour
- 3 eggs
- a few drops of vanilla essence

Topping: a rounded tablespoon of plain flour, a rounded tablespoon of demerara sugar and a good knob of butter – mixed together with fingers until it resembles breadcrumbs.

Pre-heat oven 350F/180C/Gas 4

You put the margarine/butter and sugar in a saucepan and melt. Mash the bananas with the essence. Stir the flour into the melted fat/sugar in the saucepan. Beat the eggs and add, with the bananas, to the mixture. Stir in the chocolate chips carefully and do not overmix.

Put the mixture into a 7x8 inch tin, greased and floured. Sprinkle with the topping

Bake in the centre of oven at about 350 degrees (180 for me) for 1 hour and 40 minutes (1 hour 30 minutes for me)

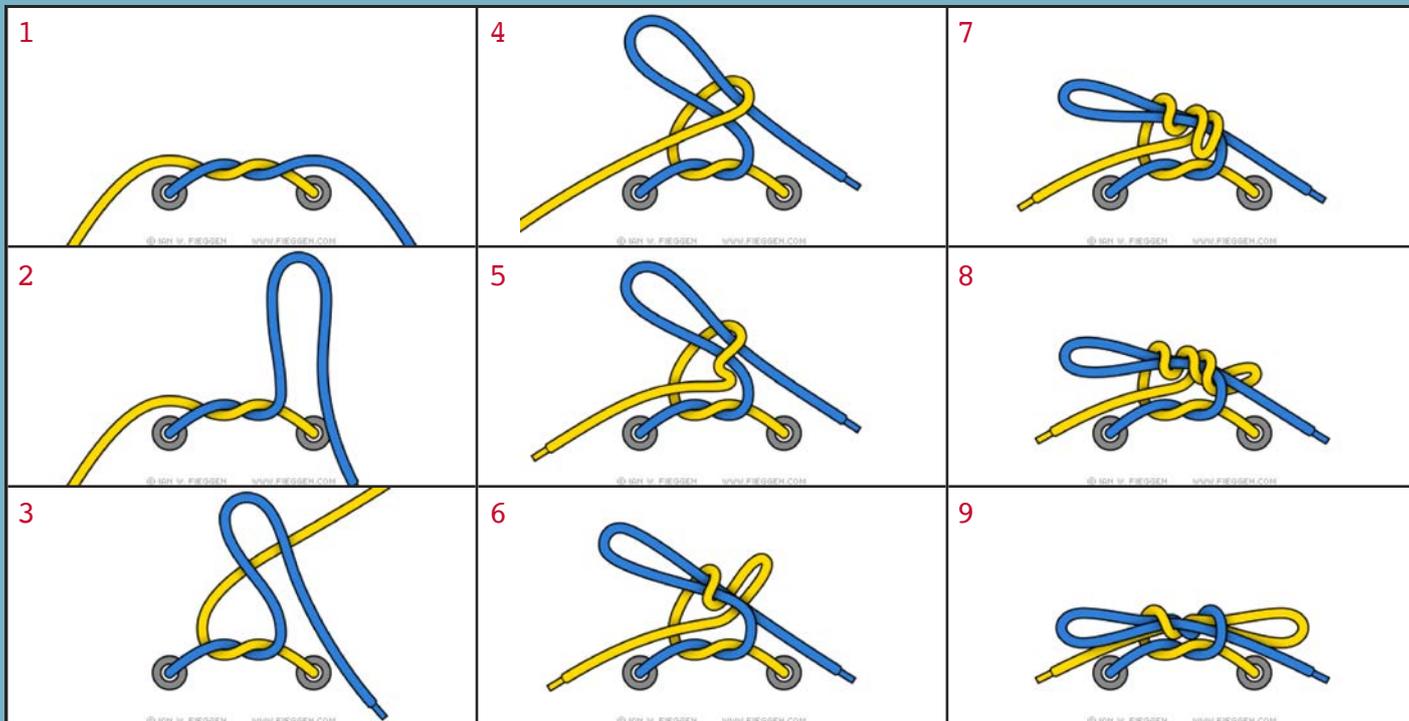
Leave for 3 days to mature before cutting

The cake improves the longer kept, if it gets the chance but we never have. Enjoy!!!!

Contributed by Kathleen Honeysett (otherwise known as Honey)

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In ages courtesy of Jan W Feggen www.feggen.com

*Our grateful thanks to everyone who contributed to this edition, either with a report, article or via some truly magnificent photography – The Editorial Team (Audrey, Brenda and David)*

*Edited by David Hollamby – please send your walk reports and photos to David as soon as possible, after your walk, to: martlets68@btinternet.com*

**www.battleramblers.org**