



BEACHY HEAD RAMBLERS

Newsletter

January / February 2020

www.beachyheadramblers.com



membership: beachyheadmembership@gmail.com

newsletter: alanhibbert@hotmail.com

NEW COMMITTEE ELECTED AT AGM

Following the AGM in East Dean on 3rd November the line-up of the BHR committee for the next 12 months is as follows:

Chairman : Colin Wharton
Secretary : Elaine Saunders
Treasurer : Peter Clinch
Membership Secretary : Sue Tomkins
Walks Co-ordinator : Peter Slepokura
Evening Walks Co-ordinator : Lucie Thorneycroft
Social Events Co-ordinator : David Fry
Newsletter Editor : Alan Hibbert

NEW WALKS CO-ORDINATOR



BHR's hard-working Walks Co-ordinator Diana Gerard stood down from the role at November's AGM and received the thanks of the committee and all members present (as well as an apple tree for her garden!)

She is replaced by Peter Slepokura (*left*) who bravely stepped forward to take on this difficult task. It is hoped that all walk leaders will make Peter's task as easy as possible by filling the available dates and, equally importantly, adhering to the deadline for supplying walk details so that the programme can be published on time. Occasional non-adherence to the latter point has caused some headaches in the past.

New walk leaders are always encouraged of course, bringing fresh ideas and personalities to our rambles. There is abundant help available to new leaders, just talk to Peter at peterslepokura@gmail.com

MASTERCHEF FOR MEN !!

OK dear reader, are you ready for this? The latest idea from our brainstorming events team is a cookery competition for men! Four BHR members have been coerced / tortured / press-ganged in to “volunteering” to cook a three-course meal for you to judge. That is a total of twelve courses so don't have any breakfast that day. All meals will be served anonymously to avoid bribes and threats on the day.



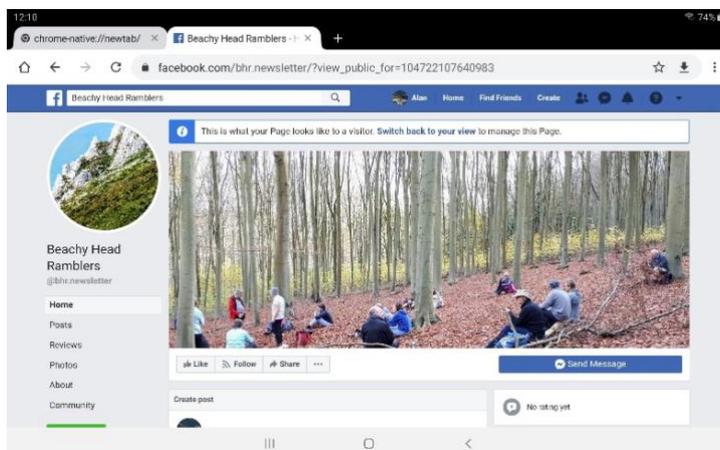
The competition will take place on Thursday 13th February at 1pm in Telscombe village hall, a cosy venue set in the heart of Telscombe village. Parking is at Telscombe Cliffs playing fields car park with a short walk to the village. The intrepid chefs need as many members as possible to come along and sample and judge the courses. There will be a small donation to cover the cost of the hall hire and the food. Bring your own wine / beer / Alka Seltzer

If you're coming to the event please let David know at dfry.architects@gmail.com by no later than the end of January so they know how many to cook for.

LUNCH CLUB

The next lunch club meeting will be at The Half Moon, Ditchling Road, Plumpton, (BN7 3AF) on Thursday 16th January at 1pm. The Half Moon is a 19th century traditional country pub featuring a varied menu of both traditional and contemporary dishes. As usual David will organise a short walk before the meal for those interested. If you are coming please let David know at dfry.architects@gmail.com by no later than 10th January.

NEW BHR FACEBOOK PAGE



Following a number of requests from members, BHR now has a new Facebook page. It replaces the old page which hasn't been used for some time and has now been taken down. If you are a Facebook user you can now “Like” the new page in order to follow it and get updates in your newsfeed. Those members who are not Facebook users can still view the page and bookmark it to their favourites if they wish.

Either way, you can view the page at www.facebook.com/bhr.newsletter or by clicking on the Facebook logo in the newsletter masthead.

Non-Facebook users should rest assured that this is an additional method of staying in touch with members and does not replace any of the existing methods of contact.

ASH DIEBACK ON THE DOWNS



National and local media have for some time been carrying reports of the deadly fungus which is decimating the UK's ash trees, and the problem has now reached the Eastbourne downland. The large area of woodland stretching from Butts Brow to Meads consists almost entirely of ash and has now been earmarked for felling.

The disease causes the trees to slowly die and become weak, resulting in branches falling off or possibly the whole tree collapsing, causing an obvious threat to walkers and drivers. Now Eastbourne Borough Council, in unison with the Forestry Commission, has embarked on a 5-year programme to fell all the affected woodland, *shown in dark green on the adjacent map*.

The felling will only take place during the winter months in order to minimise the impact on wildlife, but some footpaths will be affected during this time. A council spokesperson said "..... it is inevitable that some woodland walks will be inaccessible to the public while this essential work is undertaken". Work has already begun at the northern end of the affected area at Butts Brow resulting in road and car park closures.

Some of the cut timber will be left in place to provide habitats for insects, birds and other flora and fauna, but most will be removed and the work is predicted to open up the "lost" panoramic views from the upper reaches of the downland. Small glades and meadows will be opened up, and some targeted replanting with mixed species will avoid another monoculture disaster similar to the one we are now facing.

RECENT EVENTS



On 5th November a BHR group found their way in the pitch dark on a night walk from Glynde to Cliffe Hill. After some comic moments struggling along field edges looking for gates and stiles, they were rewarded with magnificent views overlooking Lewes. It was a drone's eye view of the torchlight processions winding their way through the streets, followed by multiple bonfires and a series of never-ending firework displays. Hot dogs were cooked on a stove and a great night was had by all. It will definitely be in the BHR calendar for 2020

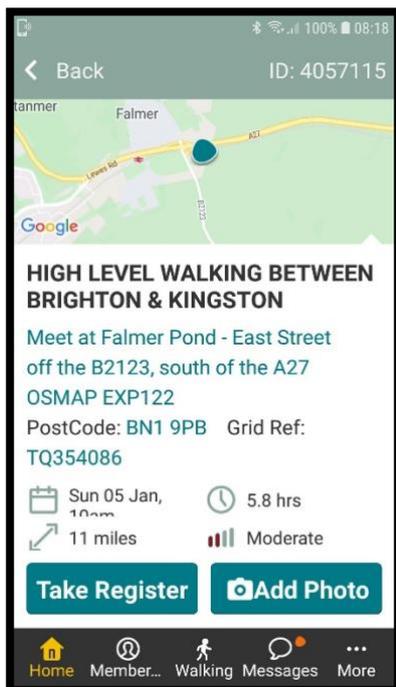


Many thanks to the Berwick Inn for once again providing us with an excellent Christmas lunch. And thanks to Bob B for organising it once again. Bob led an eight-mile pre-lunch ramble which turned out to be extremely muddy. Back at the pub, with muddy boots left in the cars and muddy trousers hidden under the tables, 35 members enjoyed the Inn's usual high standard of service and food. Follow that next year Bob!



BHR swapped the Downs for the bridges of London on December 14th when, on a bright but cold day, a group walked from Kew Bridge to Tower Bridge, crossing each bridge to the opposite bank as they went. A total of 20 bridges were crossed and 20 miles walked. Starting in daylight, the walk finished after dark with the bridges lit up and the embankments decked in Christmas lights. A few dropped out along the way, but nine walkers made it to the end. Legs were aching but it had been good fun and a great experience.

- ❖ *Another Thames walk will take place in the Spring, this time between London Bridge and the Greenwich peninsula.*



UPDATES TO THE RAMBLERS APP

A recent update to the Ramblers smartphone app means that it now contains around 3,000 walking routes which members can view, follow, or save for future use. This is in addition to details of all led walks by Ramblers Groups throughout the country.

Walks can be searched by location, length, or day of the week. As before, the 'home' page upon opening the app shows the upcoming walks for your own Group, (in our case the next five BHR rambles). Among other things the app also contains details of discounts available to members, as well as your digital membership card.

The Ramblers app is free to download for both Android and iPhone.



..... AND ANOTHER APP

Your editor, along with a group of BHR walk leaders, recently attended a first-aid course run by St John Ambulance. Our instructor reminded us of the value of the “What 3 Words” app in helping to potentially save lives.

The app divides the entire country in to 3m squares, each defined by 3 unique words, and it is commonly used by the emergency services to precisely determine the location of any emergency. The app is more precise than postcodes or grid references and really comes in to its own when the emergency is in a countryside location away from any obvious focal points. Just open the app and it will use your phone's GPS to automatically generate your 3-word code which you can then pass on to the 999 operator.

The app is free to download for both Android and iPhone.

ALFRISTON ROAD WORKS

The village of Alfriston is a favourite spot for starting many BHR rambles, so the news that the High Street will be closed to traffic for the next five months is worth noting. According to Southern Water, who are carrying out the work to replace the water main, the village centre will be closed to through traffic between the North Street and Sloe Lane junction in the north and the High Street and Tye junction in the south. Work begins on 2nd January and will continue until June. Diversions will be in place and walk leaders and members attending rambles in the area would be advised to allow extra travelling time.

HISTORY WALKS : ASHDOWN FOREST

Many a BHR ramble has been taken along the multitude of routes through the Ashdown Forest, its open heathland providing vistas across the Weald to both the North and South Downs. It has a long and varied history:

The Ashdown Forest was created as a hunting forest shortly after the Norman Conquest of 1066. The word “forest” did not have the modern meaning of “heavily wooded” ; medieval hunting forests like Ashdown consisted of a mixture of heath, woodland and other habitats in which game could flourish and deer could find open pasture for roaming and woodland thickets for cover. From the 13th century onwards the forest was fenced and used extensively by nobility for hunting, most famously when Henry VIII was a regular visitor and owned a hunting lodge near Hartfield. Gates or ‘hatches’ in the fencing allowed locals to graze their livestock and collect firewood. These entrances to the forest are remembered today in place names such as Chuck Hatch and Chelwood Gate.

Evidence of early human occupation of the area is found in the hundreds of archaeological sites that have been identified on the forest, including Bronze Age round barrows, Iron Age enclosures, prehistoric field systems, Roman iron workings, and the medieval fencing. The forest was the centre of a nationally important iron industry on two occasions, during the Roman occupation of Britain and

again in the Tudor period when, in 1496, England's first blast furnace was built at Newbridge. Iron working requires large amounts of iron ore and wood to make charcoal. Ashdown Forest had both in abundance and the deep, steep-sided valleys could be dammed to provide water power for furnaces and forges.

In times of Royal patronage much of the forest was given in to private hands and frequently exchanged ownership. The area commonly referred to these days as 'Ashdown Forest' in fact contains much private land, the areas of common access being shown in dark green on the map.

Today Ashdown Forest 'commoners' are still afforded the right to graze their livestock and collect firewood from the forest floor.



It is not possible to talk about Ashdown Forest without mentioning its most famous resident : Winnie-the-Pooh.

In 1925, the author and playwright Alexander Alan Milne purchased Cotchford Farm near Hartfield, initially as a weekend retreat from London. A keen walker, he was inspired by his new surroundings to invent the Pooh stories, based on the teddy bear owned by his son Christopher Robin Milne. The first book 'Winnie-the-Pooh' was published in 1926, followed two years later by the sequel 'The House on Pooh Corner', both illustrated by E H Shepard. (left)

The various locations in the books are real places on the forest ; the fictional 'Hundred Acre Wood' was in reality Five Hundred Acre Wood ; Galleon's Leap was inspired by the prominent hilltop of Gill's Lap ; and a clump of trees just north of Gill's Lap became Christopher Robin's 'The Enchanted Place'. The most famous location is of course Pooh Sticks Bridge, located along a bridleway not far from Cotchford Farm. Built in 1907 and originally called Posingford Bridge, it was replaced in the 1970s and upon it's re-opening by Christopher Robin Milne was officially renamed Poohsticks Bridge. Such is the bridge's popularity with tourists that by 1999 it again needed replacing, and this time a much stronger bridge was constructed, funded in part by a large donation from the Disney Corporation who since 1961 have owned the rights to Winnie. That bridge has so far managed to withstand the constant stream of tourists from all corners of the globe.



A A Milne died at Hartfield in 1956 and thirteen years later Cotchford Farm was again in the headlines. By then it was the home of Rolling Stone Brian Jones and it was in the swimming pool there that he met his death by drowning on 3rd July 1969.



Another well-known site of historical interest is the Airman's Grave, on the heathland between Duddleswell and Nutley. Not actually a grave, it is a memorial commemorating the six crew of the Wellington bomber which crashed in bad weather when returning home with engine problems from an attempted raid over Cologne in July 1941. It has become a focal point on Remembrance Sunday each year. In 2019 a group from BHR joined about 3,000 people to observe the two minutes silence followed by the playing of the bugle and the laying of wreaths. 

- ❖ *The next walk on the Ashdown Forest takes place on Sunday 19th January. Full details in the Jan/Feb walks programme, the BHR website and the Ramblers app.*

We've walked past it along the riverside in Lewes and wondered at its unusual design, now it has won an award: The Riverside House in Lewes has won first prize in the Residential category of the inaugural South Downs National Park Design Awards.



If you have a news item or an item of interest you would like to see included in the newsletter please contact Alan Hibbert at alanhibbert@hotmail.com

