



# BEACHY HEAD RAMBLERS

Newsletter  
March / April 2020

[www.beachyheadramblers.com](http://www.beachyheadramblers.com)



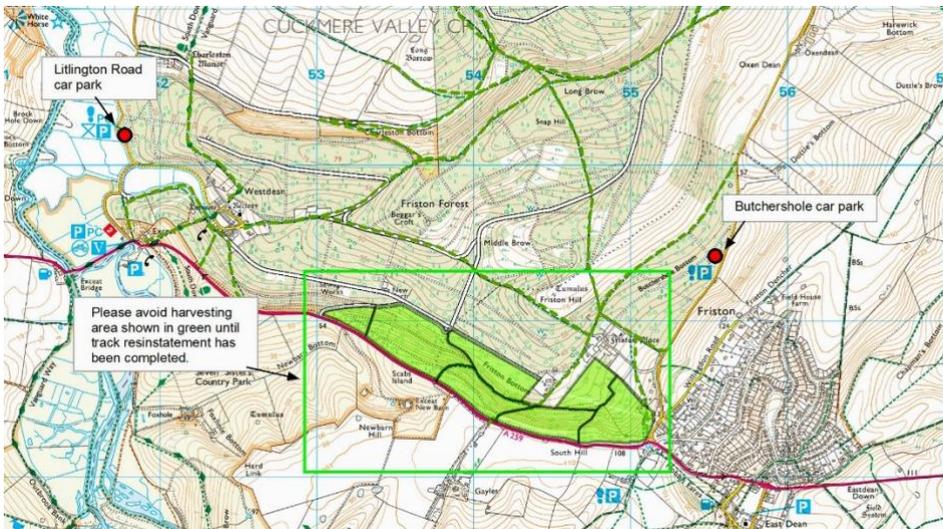
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## FRISTON FOREST

Anyone who has attempted to use the southern section of Friston Forest in the recent past will know that it is currently an impenetrable quagmire. And according to the latest information it looks likely to stay that way until the summer.

The logging that has been taking place in the forest is partly due to the thinning out of the beech crop as well as taking out damaged ash trees. Unfortunately the trucks which have been transporting the logs have churned up all of the paths, rendering them dangerous and completely unusable.



This winter's heavy rainfall has made matters much worse, and will also contribute to a delay in the planned restoration of the paths, which are now unlikely to become fully usable before the summer. In the meantime the section of the forest shown in bright green on the map should continue to be avoided.

## DO MORE WALKERS MEAN MORE PROBLEMS?

"Victim of our own success" was a phrase used at a recent BHR committee meeting, referring to the fact that it is now uncommon to have 25 or more participants on our Wednesday and Sunday rambles. Whilst this is good news for the future of the club and for rambling in general, it does sometimes lead to the problem of groups getting 'strung out' over a long distance.

Whilst it is certainly the walk leader's responsibility to keep the group together, especially when crossing obstacles such as wonky stiles and busy roads or climbing steep hills, we can all do our bit to help by looking out for each other. It was the view of the committee that there should be a reminder that each of us should ensure that we stay close to the person in front of us, thereby avoiding long gaps opening up and long waits for the tail to catch up. This is especially true in woodland, where twists and turns in the pathways can lead to confusion if you do not have sight of the walker in front of you.

The other concern is car parking: Many of our walks start in small car parks or laybys and our increasing numbers have led to some members having to park on country lanes and grass verges. The committee feels that in these 'greener' times we, as a club, do not put enough emphasis on car-sharing. Taking it in turns to drive and give each other lifts could reduce the number of cars used, but remember that charging people for a lift would breach the conditions of your insurance.

## MASTERCHEF !

It may not have had anything to do with rambling, but everyone who attended the BHR Masterchef cookery competition agreed it was great fun. Four intrepid male volunteers each cooked up a 3-course meal for tasting. The quality was excellent and David, Peter, Andrew and Richard are all to be congratulated on providing such a feast.

From pates and soups through moussaka, curries and dahls to gateaux, cheesecake and crème brulee, everyone gamely waded through a total of twelve courses to find the winner. Eventually Andrew walked away with the prize of a hand-crafted wooden spoon and bowl (*pictured*).

Many thanks to David for planning and organising the whole event, and a mention also for the venue: Telscombe village hall is a charming character building with a welcoming log fire, a bar and a well-equipped kitchen. We'll be back!



❖ More photos of this event are on the [BHR Facebook page](#)



## NAVIGATION COURSES

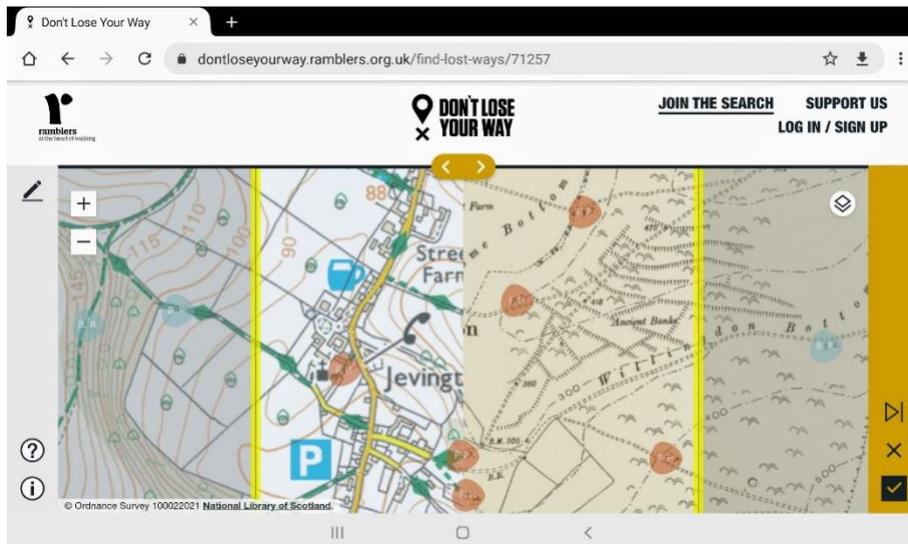
Courses in navigation skills are being offered this summer for anyone who is interested. Subjects covered will include map reading, following a route and basic compass work. These are all useful skills for budding walk leaders or anyone who would like to know how to get the best from their Ordnance Survey maps.

If you would like to know more contact David at [dfry.architects@gmail.com](mailto:dfry.architects@gmail.com)

## REDISCOVERING HISTORIC PATHS

For some time now the Ramblers have been raising awareness of the need to rediscover our historic rights of way and get them added to the definitive maps before the deadline of 2026 imposed by the Government.

The “Don’t Lose Your Way” campaign has now been stepped up by the launch of a new mapping tool. Accessible via the Ramblers website, this new aid to discovering lost paths has a ‘slider’ along the top of the map enabling the viewer to compare present day OS maps with historic OS and Bartholomew maps. Any path that has disappeared from the modern map can be marked and recorded by following the instructions on the site.



Once this information has been recorded there is then much time-consuming work to be done by the Ramblers in further investigation and serving notices to local authorities and landowners. Because of the time needed they are asking members to get involved in this stage of the process to ensure as many of our ancient paths as possible are recorded and saved.

The interactive map, together with instructions and FAQs, can be found at <https://dontloseyourway.ramblers.org.uk/find-lost-ways>

## LUNCH CLUB

The next lunch club will be held on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April at the Pilot Inn in Eastbourne. Situated in Meads Street (BN20 7RW) the Pilot is a very popular local with Meads area residents, serving real ales and a varied menu. Meet at 1pm, but let David know you're coming so he can book a table. [dfry.architects@gmail.com](mailto:dfry.architects@gmail.com)

## A FREE TALK ON WALKING GEAR & EQUIPMENT



Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March is the date for a BHR visit to the Cotswold Outdoor store in Tunbridge Wells for a talk on walking gear and equipment. Meet in Tunbridge Wells at 4pm for a meal or go straight to the Cotswold store for the talk at 6pm. Either way, be sure to book your place with David at [dfry.architects@gmail.com](mailto:dfry.architects@gmail.com)

## THE BERWICK CHURCH MURALS

Most of us will be aware of the Bloomsbury Group murals which adorn the walls of Berwick Church; many of our walks pass by and we rarely miss the opportunity to step inside and view the artwork. The original sketches made by Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell in preparation for the work are held in store at the Towner Art Gallery in Eastbourne. Their fragility means they are not normally on public display but there is an opportunity to view these drawings and hear a talk about the background to the commissioning of the murals and the creative process involved. "Perspectives on the Berwick Church Murals" is at the Towner on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> April at 2pm. Tickets are £6 / £5 concessions and can be booked at [www.townereastbourne.org.uk/events/talks-tours-events](http://www.townereastbourne.org.uk/events/talks-tours-events)

## THAMES PATH WALK, PART 2

Following the successful London Bridges walk from Kew to Tower Bridge, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thames walk will cover the area between London Bridge, Greenwich and the Thames Barrier. Full details will be in the next newsletter, but for now you can get the date in your diary : Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May.

## NATIONAL TRUST EVENTS

Spring is on its way and the National Trust properties in our area are yawning and stretching and preparing themselves for the new season. A major event is the long-awaited re-opening of the Park Mill at Batemans in Burwash. After a major renovation project it starts milling again on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> February and will be selling freshly milled flour.



'Tis the season of garden tours and they are happening at Alfriston Clergy House on 21<sup>st</sup> April and Monk's House in Rodmell on 24<sup>th</sup> April. Meanwhile on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> April you can take a guided walk & talk through Sheffield Park's bluebell woods. A little further afield but worth the journey, the rhododendron festival at Nymans in Handcross begins on 20<sup>th</sup> April.

Lamb House in Rye has 'behind the scenes' tours on 7<sup>th</sup> March and 4<sup>th</sup> April, and our friends at Birling Gap are hosting an archaeology walk on the Seven Sisters on 19<sup>th</sup> April. More information on all of these events is at [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

## HISTORY WALKS : SUSSEX FOLKLORE

*The arrival of All Fools Day on the 1<sup>st</sup> April seems to be a good excuse to talk about some of the more bizarre myths and legends connected with the surrounding countryside. There are abundant stories of fairies, ghosts, the devil, buried treasure ..... and treacle mines.*

The Golden Calf, according to the Bible, was an idol made by the Israelites when they feared Moses would not return from Mount Sinai after 40 days and nights. It is of course entirely plausible that it should now be buried on Clayton Hill as legend suggests, and that it should be protected by the Devil himself.



Less iconic, but still rooted in legend, are the silver coffin buried on Firle Beacon, the gold coffin under the Long Man of Wilmington, and the silver coffin and knight in golden armour both separately buried on Mount Caburn.

All of which makes the crock of gold in Chiddingly guarded over by an evil spirit in the shape of a black hen seem quite reasonable.



The simple explanation behind the Long Man of Wilmington (the tallest man in England at 226 feet) is that the outline was drawn around his body as he lay dead. He had been involved in a rock-throwing fight with another giant who lived on Firle Beacon and was slain by a well-aimed boulder.

Yet another giant, by the name of Gill, was resident on Mount Caburn. Gill's Grave is on the slopes of Mount Caburn, and Gill's Ridge near Crowborough and Gill's Lap on the Ashdown Forest are said to allude to the same figure.



The Devil is a busy man in Sussex, leaving his mark all over the place, the best known being a certain valley on the Downs above Brighton. Geologists will give you their version of how Devil's Dyke was created, but of course the true story is much more interesting:



The Devil, infuriated at the conversion of Sussex from paganism, swore that he would dig through the Downs to the sea in one night and flood the County. Starting near Poynings he dug furiously, sending great clods of earth flying left and right – one became Chanctonbury, another Cissbury, and yet another Mount Caburn. At around midnight the noise disturbed an old woman who, on seeing what was happening, lit a candle on her window-sill, holding a sieve in front of it to make a glowing globe. The Devil looked round and mistook it for the rising sun, so he flew away leaving his work half done. As he flew out over the channel a great dollop of earth fell from his cloven hoof, and that's how the Isle of Wight was created. Now you know the truth it makes perfect sense.

Hills always attract more than their fair share of legends, and the hill forts of Cissbury Ring (*right*) and Chanctonbury Ring are no exception. Chanctonbury is said to be haunted by a Saxon killed at the Battle of Hastings, though how he comes to be at Chanctonbury is left unexplained. Even more bizarrely, Chanctonbury's ghost is sometimes said to be no less a figure than Julius Ceaser! Meanwhile, at Cissbury, the ghost is that of a highwayman on horseback who was hanged nearby and whose corpse kept popping up out of the ground when buried.



At Chanctonbury you can apparently raise the Devil by running around the ramparts seven times. Others say that the Devil steals trees from the hill unless the locals run round it three times anti-clockwise on Midsummer Eve. In the event, what put paid to many of Chanctonbury's trees was not the Devil but the Great Storm of 1987 (perhaps conjured up by Satan?). Cissbury, meanwhile, boasts its own family of fairies who live inside the hill. They can be seen dancing on top of the Ring at midnight each Midsummer Eve, but if you go to watch be sure they don't see you or they will disappear.

The origins of all these tales lay buried in the mists of time, but other stories are more recent and are less to do with superstition and more to do with practical jokes. Which brings us to treacle mines...



Millions of years ago wild cane sugar proliferated in the Kent and Sussex Weald, and as it rotted the molasses drained in to the folds of the hills resulting in great underground lakes of treacle trapped between the clay and chalk layers. The village of Buxted claims to be the first to exploit this resource, opening the first treacle mine in 1735. This was followed by other mines in Patcham, Rowhook, Crowborough and, most notably, in Sompting where the local football team is still known as "The Treacle Miners". Dowsing with rods has shown a rich seam of treacle along the ley line running from the Long Man of Wilmington through Crowborough to Tonbridge, but the mining of it is no longer viable following competition from large corporations such as Tate & Lyle.

Whilst treacle mining is most prevalent in Kent and Sussex it is by no means restricted to the south of England. Further north, where the weather is colder, the treacle runs closer to the surface and forms in to soft rocks. This has given rise to the open cast mining of the Kendal Mint Cake quarries.

Every word is true. 

- ❖ *A walk to visit both Cissbury Ring and Chanctonbury Ring takes place on All Fools Day, Wednesday April 1<sup>st</sup>. Details in the March/April walks programme, the BHR website and the Ramblers app.*



*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](mailto:alanhibbert@hotmail.com)*

