

Brisk Walks down south

Nineteen walkers of varying briskness took their annual break last October for four days of walking on the Sussex downs, staying again (for some) at the comfortable HF Holidays country house at Abingworth. Owing to ill health John Jaques, whose inspiration and leadership are central to the activities of the Friday Brisk Walks group, could not join us this year for the first time since he started the group.

Ring road

A keynote walk took us to two important local landmarks. The first one that we came to, after passing the eponymous dewpond, was Chanctonbury Ring. This is an ancient hill fort with several tumuli nearby and a distinctive clump of mainly beech trees at the summit. The trees had to be largely replanted following the devastation of the great windstorm of October 1987. Our circuit also took in a climb to the top of a much larger hill fort, called Cissbury Ring, with fine views over Worthing and out to the English Channel. There are traces of flint mines at this site and the use of knapped flint is evidenced in the construction of many local houses, as well as the Grade II listed Wattle House at the village of Findon. The latter was built in 1803 to store wattle pens which were used for the annual sheep fair on the green. Our route back to the South Downs Way took us close to a place described on the OS map as adventure activities; it turns out that it's a gun club and although shooting could be heard in the distance we didn't have to duck any hot lead.

He went thataway

Over the course of the week our walks covered various ways and trails, principally sections of the South Downs Way, Monarch's Way and the Literary Trail. The Monarch's Way is so called as it roughly follows the route taken by King Charles II as he was making his way to the coast making his escape to France in 1651 after defeat in the battle of Worcester. Many paths bear this name but what was his actual route? For example, at a spot called No Man's Land there is a Y junction with two onward trails named Monarch's Way; one with a waymark in blue, the other yellow. It has to be said that this long distance footpath is but an approximation of the route taken by his majesty.

This time Arun

As a change from high ground most of the time, one walk after starting with a climb to the South Downs Way took us gently downhill, passing a well maintained gallop, to the left bank of the River Arun. From here we had a fine view of Arundel Castle. Crossing the town centre by the remains of what is called Maison Dieu we climbed again, this time past the cathedral to make our way through the undulating grounds of Arundel Park before completing the circular walk with another stretch of river along the right bank.

We record here our thanks to Mick and Jan, David and Helen and to Michelle for all the hard work they put in to plan, reconnoitre and lead the walks; also to Penny for handling the bookings with her usual efficiency.

Richard Owen