**River Chess & Gade Valleys Circular, Sunday 3rd February 2013**

27 walkers, 21 miles – leader Godfrey O’Callaghan

We were 27 before someone confused the multitude of runners gathering for the Watford half marathon with the elite of the London group. We never saw him again – or his kind lass who went back to look for him. Paul T showed empathy by joining the search, rejoining at lunch – to hearty applause. Concerned, the group nevertheless pushed on towards the Red Lion at Chenies.

Three rivers and a canal formed the core of the walk – the Gade, the Chess flowing through its picturesque valley and the Colne – and the Grand Union Canal which all flow into the same place at Rickmansworth. Water, water, all around but, thankfully, not from the heavens. Near to the finish the Gade had flooded the surrounding area, the twilight just enough to cause dark reflections in dark water which in some places flushed across the path softly rippling and chattering in the windless night air.

TopMud: For the MudStruggler it has been a vintage year. For them a walk is no longer a walk without it. It hardly needs saying that the walk had its share. In truth not a great amount, but it was of the highest order – viscous and treacly – fully revealed in all its unvarnished glory – unlike the sneaky menace lurking beneath melting snow ready to rip the boot off an unsuspecting member!

Back at Watford those with electronic gadgets totted up the distance as around 21 miles, give or take the odd inch, and we were relieved the hear that the missing member was no longer missing but had given up and gone home.