**Peter’s Ancestral Trails, Sunday 1st February 2015**

16 walkers, 17.5 miles – leader Peter Jull

On Sunday 1st February 5 from London (Bulla drove & 4 on the train) and 11 from Kent congregated at Hollingbourne station for 9am and Peter’s Ancestral Trails No1.

The walk began with a substantial session of collecting claggy, clingy Kentish mud as shoes turned to diver’s boots across unreinstated arable fields, dodging from wood to wood. The strenuousness left one straggler struggling and when we’d got to Thurnham (Peter’s great-grandmother was baptised 1856) when she graciously offered to drop out and follow her map for a few miles at a gentler pace.

Sadistic mud was followed by a sadistically steep climb straight up the North Downs scarp. Breath catching mixed with breath taking views while the strong wind blew your breath away. Over the top a sprinkling of snow on the ground was passed and later followed by a snow flurry or two but for the rest of the day only a biting wind impaired the weather for walking.

Regrouping at Thurnham Castle (no relations) was followed by a tree hugging/fence clinging very steep and slippery descent of the motte. The rest of the morning was gentler varied terrain, passing Bicknor and with some views of Sheppey and glimpses of Essex. Stile congestion kept the field strung out and counting them off at the last turn to lunch went 10,11,12…wait…wait…uh oh three down!

Back to the road, into the village where straight on would have taken the missing three, round the long way to the pub to find a GPS had got the missing three there anyway. Speedy service at The Sun, Bredgar allowed a quick afternoon arable start. The flinty soil of these higher fields made them less arduous despite their size. A stretch with seesaw stiles and unopenable gates hampered the crossing of a deep valley approaching Wormshill (Peter’s 13 x great-grandfather born c1440). A few more large fields and it was downhill, gently, all the way back to Hollingbourne.