**Tulip Fever, Sunday 5th April 2015**

13 walkers, 20 miles – leader Peter Jull

13 walkers, mostly Kent members with fewer from London (defying National Rail’s Easter Sunday engineering works attempts to derail travel plans) and two from Sussex gathered at Sole Street station.

The rationale for this walk being squeezed into the schedule turned out to be spurious as the expected release date of the film *Tulip Fever* was delayed but concerns over further spuriousness caused by fog on the day of reconnaissance that nothing would be seen anyway were allayed by the trees still being devoid of foliage which meant better views were possible of Cobham Hall where the outdoor sets of canalside Amsterdam were shot.

The "unlucky 13 walkers" missed an early turning and followed a substantial loop to get back on route.

On to the first climb of the day up to the Darnley Mausoleum and early elevenses. The bulk of the day’s 2000ft of ascent followed and with it, more of the descent, including down from Holly Hill at 25% which would have been “adventurous” if the recent mud hadn’t dried underfoot. Space was at a premium but those wanting food at the Neville Bull in Birling were squeezed in at premium prices.

Emerging from lunch the morning’s light cloud had cleared to blue skies and most spent the afternoon in shirtsleeves. Found lurking in the churchyard was our friend "Pillbox" having made his way there on his own after arriving by a later train. Real tulips were spotted in a garden as we left the village then, as the scarp of the North Downs loomed ominously closer, a photo stop was made at Coldrum Longbarrow before tackling the long climb. From the top of Trottiscliffe Country Park a decaying woodland path was bushwhacked, our contribution to keeping it open. Soon there was just one more hill to climb, one more lane to follow, one last park to cross and we were safely back at the station, the morning miss (mostly) forgiven.

Photographs by Peter Jull