**South of the A12, Saturday 9th November 2019**

17 walkers, 17 miles – leader Ron Williamson

The Essex countryside was clothed in secrecy as 17 walkers set forth from Ingatestone station in thick fog, which was eventually replaced by bright sunshine, then drizzle and finally rain for the last half mile to Harold Wood. As expected ground conditions in places were very wet but remarkably largely mud free.

As is usual in this part of the county foot paths were well maintained but perhaps by an overzealous stylish work force with a passion for creating the most intricate ways of providing access from one field to the next, 4 stiles being required to bridge a gap of 20ft.

This proved to be a varied walk ranging from wide open views across the rolling countryside to the autumn beauty of the ancient forest of Thorndon Park, always close to town it was nevertheless possible to complete some 17 miles with only 1 mile being on road.

Still not sure how we managed to do an extra two miles, but clearly the advance party charging ahead through the woods in search of refreshments contributed, especially as they missed the correct turn and had to retrace their steps.

Photographs by Ian Watson; more from Ian on the group Facebook site.