**Purley Perambulation, Saturday 24th February 2024**

22 walkers, 19 miles with 2,045ft of ascent – leader Gavin Fuller

21 walkers joined our leader for the group’s first walk from Purley Oaks station, which honoured to an extent old-timer birthday boy Dave Williams by going over some ground he’d covered on a walk six years to the day previously. It was soon a case of going from Oaks to Beeches as the walk wended its way through Wettern Tree Garden to Purley Beeches, before for the sake taking in Croydon’s Borough Top in Sanderstead Plantation. Then past one of the Stones of Croydon it was eventually out of suburbia in Kings Wood, and on to a route made very muddy by the plentiful pain there had been over the previous few days.

As a result a walk which our leader had found not overly taxing when on a recce in December proved to be far more so on the day of staging; not helpful when there was a fair bit of undulation! It was over the North Downs via the Woldingham Parish Boundary Path, set up by the local Scouts for the Platinum Jubilee, and certainly not a stroll in the park as once over the Downs and down a steep descent, it was not long before a 100+ flight of steps back up onto them.

Fortunately the lunch break in Marden Woods came not long after this, and then it was a gentle descent past Woldingham School and then more undulations out of the part, enlivened by negotiating a couple of fallen trees and the sight of a rather impressive stag. Back onto the WPBP, it was down into Caterham, where two people left at the break point, and the sight of the next hill in the village made a third decide to break off as well!

Then it was more undulations across a somewhat empty Surrey National Golf Course, a walk across the length of Happy Valley where at the end despite all their tribulations everyone opted for the steep ascent out rather than the gradual one. The climb onto Farthing Down saw our exhausted walkers rewarded with a splendid view of the towers of the City of London and the Shard gleaming in the evening sunlight, which lifted the spirits for the final descent to welcome relief in the sight of Coulsdon South station, by which time they’d come up with some alternative adjectives for the walk!

Photographs by Barry Eade, Gavin Fuller and Steve Wills