**South Downs, Not Much of the Way, Saturday 25th September 2021**

8 walkers, 21.6 miles – leader Gavin Fuller

As most walks undertaken by the group between Eastbourne and Lewes (or vice versa) tend to heavily use the South Downs Way en route this was an attempt to link the two towns avoiding this National Trail as much as possible. So rather than starting at Eastbourne station the walk added the next up the line at Hampden Park to the roster of the group’s starting points, and soon was in the park that presumably leant its name to the station. After crossing the park, it was soon up onto the Downs, crossing the SDW on Willingdon Hill on a traverse to the village of East Dean, where the leader tormented the group by walking past the refreshment outlets there. Climbing out of the village, it was on past Friston Place, with some footpath signs that hadn’t been there a couple of months previously, into Friston Forest and out again at West Dean, where after passing through the village it was onto a short stretch of the SDW to Exceat. Then it was up the Cuckmere valley before the stiff climb up High and Over, where lunch was taken overlooking the valley.

During lunch the skies, which had been largely cloudy, cleared, and it turned into a glorious afternoon as the walk passed above the seemingly ever-expanding Rathfinny Vineyard en route to Firle Beacon, where our route coalesced with the SDW for all of ¾ of a mile. Descending into Firle, the lure of the Ram Inn didn’t entice the whole group, and two pressed on whilst the rest enjoyed some welcome refreshment.

After passing through the parkland of Firle Place, it was on to Glynde and the final major climb of the day up Mount Caburn, where the numerous parascenders of earlier had disappeared, only a solitary one still aloft as we reached the top. Then it was down (and up again for a while, to take the total ascent for the day to 2,382ft) to Lewes in beautiful evening sunshine with some of the group succeeding in a dash for the next train back to London.

Photographs by Gavin Fuller