**The Wealdway: Gravesend to Tonbridge, Friday 15th April 2022**

14 walkers, 29 miles – leader Gavin Fuller

For Easter 2022 London LDWA teamed up with Surrey Walking Club which had organised a 4-day hike along the above-named Long Distance Path. Given the length planned for the first stage, our leader was somewhat surprised to find that it was as many as 14 who assembled at Gravesend station on a sunny bank holiday morning. Having reached the unmarked start by the Thames, the walk then a few hundred yards later somewhat perplexingly passed an information board about the path, before passing a statue of Pocahontas and through Gravesend’s Heritage Quarter (yes, really) before a lengthy climb out of the town via a main road. Once that trudge was over it was at last into the Kent countryside, which was showing its springtime finery for much of this part of the path, with bluebells and wood anemones in profusion. Given the length of today’s route it was necessary to keep up a reasonable pace, which proved too much for one of the group in the warmth of the day, who fell back above Luddesdown to go at his own pace to the break-point at Platt for the station at Borough Green.

Having spent some time traversing the sizeable new vineyard at Luddesdown, the walk then proceeded in mercifully far less muddy conditions than on the leader’s recce a month early over the North Downs to a lunch spot with a fine view over the north end of the Weald. Having said goodbye to another walker at Platt, the afternoon’s only sizeable hill had such a gentle gradient up to it that most of the group weren’t even aware they were on it, and then it was down to West Peckham for the planned tea stop at the Swan, only to find that the pub had closed 40 minutes prior to its arrival, although it did provide water refills for those who needed it.

After that minor setback it was a final push on to the end, with a hearing of a first cuckoo of spring for many at Barnes Street. The four-mile walk along the Medway proved after a long day slightly interminable, and one of the group fell back along this stage to make his ow way into Tonbridge, but the remaining 11 made it into the town just after half-past six, an impressively speedy achievement and for two of the group a successful completion of the longest walk they’d ever done in a day.

Photographs by Gavin Fuller and Gillian Denham