**Circular Walk from Alton, Saturday 23rd May 2009**

23 walkers, 20 miles – leader Paula Buckton

The weekend started well when we realised the train many of us had boarded at Woking, having alighted a train out of Waterloo, had actually come from Waterloo at around the same time - bizarre - but thank you Dave for sussing that one! So having made it to Alton without losing anyone, we set off in traditional LDWA crocodile up the high st to arrive at Eggers School in plenty of time to chat to the 100 competitors. The London contingent (Don B, Don N, Margaret, Chris D, Adrian and Tara) all seemed in good shape and as the whole mass of 480 walkers attempted to funnel through a tiny gap in the school hedge onto a narrow foot path, we prepared for our walk, rounding up the car drivers as we went, and finally tracking down Paul L who took an age to change into his shorts! We were 23 in total – what a good turnout for my first venture into leading. Following the 100 route for the first 4 or 5 miles through the village of Hollybourne, across lovely fresh green and yellow fields and through cool woods, we enjoyed the sunshine and caught up with the gossip. With not a wrong turn (or even a peak at the map) we arrived in the village of Chawton (home of Jane Austen) where several of the party thought we had come across the first 100 checkpoint (it was actually a village plant sale) Some of us ordered toasties from the teashop, others basked in the sun with their sandwiches and a few called in to the pub for a quick one. Then we were off again to enjoy the cooling effects of Chawton Park Woods with its tall pines and wide paths, eventually making our way down rutted paths and bridleways to arrive at Upper Wield village Hall, which would be transformed into checkpoint 15 by early morning, manned by London Group for 24hrs. After collecting the key (thanks everyone for the many reminders) and gobbling down homemade flapjacks and cherry cake, we set off again across the fields, now following the final 7.5 miles of the 100 route. As we struggled with the rutted paths and a particularly long stretch of tarmac, we wondered how the 100 competitors would be coping with the hard ground and the heat. But finally we arrived back at Eggers, clocking just over 22 miles. Here the train goers hot-footed across the field, the B&Bers departed in search of comfy rooms and a few of us blagged a shower at the school before meeting at the Swan hotel for a well-earned drink and a great value supper. With Nicole keen to hit the sack, the early shift (Dave, Susan, Susanne, Paula and Nicole) went back to Eggers to collect the food and were tucked into sleeping bags on the hard village hall floor at by 11pm. And so Sunday started when Dave set his alarm for 4am instead of 5 (he will pay!), but at least we had plenty of time to be set up for 5.30 as per our instructions (except that the first customer didn't arrive till 9.30! We could have stayed in bed!!) But apart from that the checkpoint went like clockwork with everyone working together to keep the walkers and runners supplied with hot and cold drinks, delicious toasted teacakes and other delicacies, all day and right through the night. The night shift (Rob, Colin, John and Gail, Paul L, Laurence and Ken who had already walked the 100 and came back to help us!!!) packed up around 5.30 and went home for a well-earned sleep. For my sins, I ended up cooking breakfast at the finish where I learned that all the London contingent had finished. Mike, a Kent member and London group leader, finished in 27hrs. Well done to the finishers and many thanks to all the check-pointers (including the middle shift not yet mentioned, Corrine, Chris K, Peter R, Ted, Iain T, Paul T, Lois, Steve P, Nigel) - a great weekend all round.