**Wadhurst to the Rother, Saturday 21st November 2009**

23 miles – leader Mike Ratcliff

Exactly one month before the shortest day of the year saw our group of walkers setting off from Wadhurst station on a typically autumnal day with most of the leaves now underfoot and the few remaining on their branches glowing with fiery hues typical of late November foliage. Heading east from Sussex we soon passed into Kent and down to Bewl Water where the scrawly rain clouds that had threatened us from the start now gradually began to dissipate, allowing a surprisingly warm and crisp blue sky to break through. As we traversed the main damn of the reservoir on its northern shore we were treated to a spectacular glare of shimmering light as the low winter sun reflected off the water below us with the Bewl Valley meandering it's way north east through the haze when looking the other way. The Sussex Border Path served as our route for much of the days' walking with a notable variety of landscapes changing along the way, passing through golden deciduous woodland round the eastern shore of Bewl; some beautiful coniferous woods near Union Street and many farms with large, gracefully undulating fields both pastoral and arable, creating a patchwork of colours and textures for a travellers eye. One particularly striking feature of the walk were the ubiquitous oast houses that dotted our path of so many styles and ages that are so common around the Kent and Sussex border. Finally reaching The Moor for our lunch stop, most of us were feeling well due for a rest as we had by then completed over fourteen miles of our walk. The Eight Bells looked after us very nicely with a warm and comforting village pub atmosphere that rendered us jovial but almost too relaxed as by now the world was cooling down and the clouds were looking darker and heavier as we headed south east towards the Rother Valley. Standing for six hundred and twenty four years, Bodiam Castle announced itself to us with no shortage of medieval drama and awe inspiring magnificence as we ascended the crest of the hill at Court Lodge Farm and found ourselves staring down upon this exquisite ruin with its fairytale castellated defences and impressive moat and grounds. We finished our walk by pushing on in a westerly direction towards Robertsbridge with the River Rother snaking its way at the bottom of its valley to our left. Under the dim glow of an early evening sun, passing through some lovely orchards with their soft floors of decaying fruit and leaves allowed us our last glimmers of daylight as dusk fell with the grand tower of the church at Salehurst creating an austere but pleasing silhouette on the gloomy western horizon. Finally the lights of Robertsbridge greeted us with some enticing smells wafting from the restaurants and shops on the high street as we crossed for our final climb up to the station and our walking complete.

Mike's reputation as a leader has travelled so far from London that a member came all the way from Yorkshire to walk with us.