**Amberley and Arundel, Saturday 27th February 2010**

14 walkers, 23 miles – leader Mike Ratcliff

This was a walk that was as wet as possible that didn't see a drop of rain all day. Sadly however, the evidence of the downpours over the previous few days were all too evident from the start of the walk. Having to make an immediate diversion from Pulborough Station to avoid extensive flooding in surrounding fields, fourteen of us walkers were forced to take a short stretch of the A29 heading south from the town towards Coldwaltham and the River Arun which had burst its banks in several places. Finally back on track near the ancient Roman station on Stane Street we headed due south to cross Amberley Wild Brooks which forms a natural flood plain just north of the town itself and of course on a day such as this we experienced the flooding all to well that makes this place such a rich haven for birds and other wildlife, having to wade along a barely recognizable track for some considerable distance. Eventually reaching the main village of Amberley we had by now earned a good mid-morning rest in the local churchyard, soon to continue our way back to the River Arun and south again towards Arundel. A very straightforward route and a simple undertaking at almost any time but not today! Much of the Monarch's Way and the low-lying fields around Houghton were completely submerged with only the tops of stiles just making themselves visible by popping their heads above the waterline. The B2139 proved to be the only available route to take us south towards Arundel Park, and when our group did eventually descend the valley back to the river the path was still deeply flooded in areas forcing us to do our fair share of scrambling through the woodland towards South Stoke. Finally reaching Arundel via Offham, we were greeted by the splendid views of the towers of Arundel Castle rising majestically above the town in the winter sunshine and we enjoyed a well overdue lunch stop in the town centre, with our group spreading out into a range of pubs and cafe's along the High Street. The afternoon saw our route head into terrain of a dramatically different nature. Heading north and east up into the South Downs via Warningcamp and another stretch along the Monarch's Way we were treated to some spectacular views looking west in the surprisingly clear and mild air near Perry Hill. After several openly exposed and undulating miles we gradually ascended to the main ridge of the downs running west to east, joining the South Downs Way itself at Chantry Post. Swinging round to take the route travelling west we now began our final push back to Amberley along that truly awe-inspiring track heading for Winchester. Thankfully for us though we had just a few more miles to complete – beautiful ones too including a traverse of both Kithurst Hill and Rackham Hill with lovely views to the north with the Greensand Hills and North Downs ridge just faintly visible on the horizon. Despite missing our desired train by just a few minutes, for the majority of the group, this proved quite a stroke of luck as we spent our last hour out together with alcohol, caffeine and a log fire in The Bridge Inn just next to Amberley Station with night now drawing in. A day to remember!