**Hamstreet to Rye, Saturday 22nd May 2010**

16 walkers, 25 miles – leader Mike Ratcliff

An extremely warm day actually saw some of us beginning the walk with jackets on as the cool low cloud that characterised this barmy May day slowly dissipated to reveal a hazy but warming sky over Hamstreet in Kent. Sixteen of us began the walk from this quite remote station in south Kent heading southwest following the Saxon Shore Way towards East Sussex and the coast. Starting the walk on relatively high ground we soon began the very gradual decent down towards Romney Marsh via the tiny village of Warehorne and eventually through Appledore passing the fantastic old church of St Mary's up on the hill just south of Kenardington, looking out southwards for eternity towards the Channel. It's truly amazing to think that this spot, so far inland today was the very shoreline itself when the church was built! With our route running roughly parallel with the Royal Military Canal until Appledore we then swung due west, leaving the Saxon Shore Way and traversing the modest but beautiful hill of Chapel Bank and then on to the National Trust site of Smallhythe Place. With the sun now hanging almost at its highest point and the temperature in the mid-twenties we proceeded due south via the High Weald Landscape Trail towards our lunch stop at Wittersham on the Isle of Oxney. This so called 'Isle' is an appropriate name as although fairly low lying itself in comparison with much of the region, it towers above the surrounding country of the supremely flat Romney Marsh like a miniature range of mountains. Wittersham however, proved an excellent choice of stop, especially on a muggy day such as this that couldn't help but make us feel hot and weary no matter how much you drank. As is so often the case with pubs, unless you are reasonably familiar with the place, they're always rather hit and miss but in this case The Swan in this village was a massive hit. An excellent pub that bent over backwards to make us feel welcome and gave us excellent food, drink and service! After leaving the pub we almost immediately passed by the splendid Norman church of St John the Baptist with the sun glowing behind its silhouette giving it a strangely ethereal presence. Now heading south-east we descended quite dramatically down to the real marshlands near Iden to pick up the Sussex Border Path running alongside the River Rother. Swinging south the river joins the Royal Military Canal that we left much earlier in the walk far to the north. Now reaching the final stages of the walk we left the towpath and headed onto the most open and exposed section on our walk which took us across the almost featureless plain of East Guldeford Level. Featureless except for several rather striking features - that of the enormous wind turbines that together form the wind farm that has become such a distinctive coastal landmark - visible right across the region since being erected just a few years ago. With the sand dunes on Camber now well in sight we then headed due south towards the beach where the sea suddenly appears in dramatic style, the waves only becoming directly visible as we reached the crest of the dunes and began to descend to these famous sands. After some well-deserved ice creams and lots to drink at the kiosks on the seafront, we promptly began our final push back to Rye. Crossing the golf course and rejoining the River Rother, this time walking upstream we approached the ancient Cinque Port with the sun now more mellow, sitting quite low in the western sky creating an attractive silhouette of the citadel as evening drew in. Picking the pace up over the last mile or so we managed to reach the station just in time to catch the 18.56 train back to Hamstreet and London which was packed. The train carried sixteen hot, tired but happy walkers I hope!