**Circular Around Caterham, Sunday 8th August 2010**

13 walkers, 24 miles – leader Mike Ratcliff

Starting just north of the M25 at Woldingham Station, thirteen of us began our Sunday walk at almost 09.00 exactly. With the weather forecast predicting a good day, we were not so surprised when the sun began to shine quite fiercely early on in the walk. Fortunately, most of the climbing on this fairly hilly route was in the early stages of the walk before the more penetrating heat that we had later in the day had set in. Despite the North Downs Way being so close to the motorway south of the Caterham Valley, we were still treated to the delightful views looking south into Kent, Surrey and Sussex in the distance and into the sunny morning from the North Downs ridge. Walking towards the east for a short while we soon made our way up the steepest and longest climb of the day back over the downs just north of Oxted to join the Vanguard Way. Now skirting Woldingham Village itself, we left the long distance path for a while to reach our most easterly point of the route at Beddlestead House. As we travelled back, now towards the west we soon found ourselves in more urban surroundings as we walked between Chelsham and the northern limits of Warlingham. We sauntered through the peaceful grounds of All Saints' Church only to find ourselves amongst a Sunday boot fair very shortly after. The steepest gradient of the route was now to be found as we approached Kenley, creeping round the side of the old quarry in the woodland there, where the cutting through the chalk hills allows the railway to snake its way up into London. Slowly and carefully descending the very steep, slippery chalky slope to reach the A22, we now passed that main road and almost immediately another railway line to tackle another hard climb up onto Kenley Common where the views behind us looking back to the wooded hills and the chalky cliff face were fantastic. It was now well past noon but enjoying the fabulously clear and sunny day we finally reached the Wattenden Arms in a quiet spot between Kenley and Old Coulsdon near the Aerodrome. After lunch, we continued our way south and west, following the London Loop past Old Coulsdon and into Happy Valley where the grass looked so parched and so much of the undulating terrain around had a dry, yellowing feel to it, so typical of late summer. Now having picked up the Downlands Circular Walk we reached what was for me one of the true highlights of the day in the form of the Church at Chaldon, where we stopped inside for a while to admire the amazing 12th century wall painting. This was a delight! After a nice rest under the shade of the trees in the churchyard we continued our way south towards the main ridge of the North Downs through fields of maize and wheat. Finally reaching the North Downs Way, we had great views of Reigate, Redhill and South Merstham when looking south west with the motorway beneath us in the haze. We were now travelling back towards the Caterham Valley to the east along some ancient tracks and with a sense of history all around. The tree cover that we had for much of this section made it a refreshing time after so much open and exposed terrain that seemed to characterise much of this route. Reaching the A22 we crossed back over, several miles to the south of where we made our crossing earlier in the day at Kenley. Finally, at Winders Hill we left the long distance path to make our final push north through some beautiful rolling cornfields that seemed to glow in the early evening light and gradually make our way down through the 'Rookery' into the valley that winds its way back up towards Woldingham and the station.