**Forest Row Circular, Saturday 16th April 2011**

23 miles – leader Mike Ratcliff

Ten of us made it to our starting point in East Sussex on a morning of disruption on the rail network though it was worth the effort I hope as the sun was shining for us early that day and the conditions underfoot were excellent. We began our day’s hike walking west away from Eridge Station and towards Ashdown Forest, soon to pick up the Weald Way just north of Crowborough. Much of the morning’s walking was characterised by patches of woodland that had some of the first bluebells of the season on display and a very green and lush feel to the whole area despite the hard and often cracked ground due to the distinct lack of rain over the previous weeks. When designing this route I was delighted to find such a terrific selection of ancient trees along the way which eventually seemed to characterise much of the walk. We stopped for a morning rest on a very distinctive area of heathland in the midst of the Ashdown Forest area just before we picked up The Vanguard Way which would take us all the way to our lunch stop at Forest Row. From this point we had a hazy but still spectacular view looking north to the Weald with the North Downs rolling along the distant horizon. After some more miles of woodland and skirting round the enormous Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Club we eventually found our lunch stop at Forest Row where most of us spent an hour and more relaxing in the sun in the park near the centre of the town. After leaving the town we continued following The Vanguard Way to find a junction on top of a beautiful ridge to the north that meets the High Weald Landscape Trail. We now began our walk back eastwards, following the long distance path and eventually joining The Sussex Border Path which at this stage followed the course of an old dismantled railway. This provided the group with some flat and easy walking that lead us for a couple of miles or so to Balls Green where we finally took a more inventive route back over the hills near Withyham and Eridge that seem to run all the way eastwards towards Tunbridge Wells which was clearly visible in the distance. After a few more undulating miles back on The Sussex Border Path we eventually made it back to a familiar track that we had actually walked some of that morning when setting out and walked the final half mile back to the station in the sun.