**West from Bentley, Saturday 13th November 2010**

18 walkers, 20 miles – leader Mike Ratcliff

Eighteen of us met at a cold and overcast Bentley Station early on Saturday morning. Starting our walk just south of the A31 we walked due north towards the rush of the weekend traffic and after crossing the busy road via the footbridge we soon approached the Hampshire village of Bentley. Continuing north out of the village we soon passed our way through the old Norman church which lies exactly on the route of St Swithun's Way. Soon finding ourselves in very rural countryside with gently undulating terrain all around we passed by several remote farms and eventually made our way through Lee Wood to skirt the southern reaches of Crondall which formed our most easterly point of the route that day. Swinging south, the sky started to clear with streaks of warm vivid blue and energising rays of sunshine breaking through the cloud, though unfortunately this was the most sunshine we would receive all day. Gradually we made our way north towards the town of Odium and the bleak field of lamas, with super views looking out over the North Hampshire plains. Reaching our most northerly point just east of Odium Airfield we finally swung south past the helicopter base and landing strips which dominated the scenery in that area. We then passed by several more farms as we walked south towards our lunch stop at The Chequers Inn in the tiny hamlet of Well. After a good hours' rest and some excellent food we set off in a south westerly direction along a track named on the O.S. map as 'Frog Lane' which had a truly ancient feel to it. Staying on this path for at least a mile or so we eventually climbed up onto the high ground which had obscured our view south for some time and then continued up and down over some quite hilly and very muddy country towards the village of Upper Froyle. Along this stretch of the walk we were treated to some excellent views looking south towards the coast though sadly never a glimpse of the sea itself. A very open and expansive terrain this certainly was, which seemed to characterise so much of this walk. The occasional clump of woodland gave much of the terrain a feel something halfway between the South and North Downs which geographically is pretty much exactly where we were. Very shortly after pausing for a drink and a bite to eat in the churchyard of Upper Froyle, we re-crossed the A31 and then the main railway line in the area coming down from London to reach our most southerly point that day at Binsted. After passing through our third lovely church of the day and right past the grave of Field Marshall Montgomery, we climbed out of the village as the light was just starting to dim and soon approached Alice Holt Forest in a delightful pinkish evening glow to finally reach our way back to the station.