**Midsummer on the Downs, Sunday 3rd July 2011**

7 walkers, 38 miles – leader Mike Ratcliff

This first Sunday in July was a stunning summer’s day and the South Downs were certainly a great place to be. Just seven of us started our walk from Berwick Station and just Dave Williams and I were the only ones to actually return there that evening with the others finishing at Seaford. Walking from the station round the southern shore of Arlington Reservoir we soon began our southward bearing towards the hills, aiming for The Long Man of Wilmington who looked down upon us from his hill in the distance. Up onto the higher ground we soon passed through Jevington then over some very undulating but bone dry terrain to reach the coast at the Belle Tout Lighthouse near Beachy Head. Soon after this we had our first stop at Birling Gap where we all had a well-deserved drink and some an ice cream too. We then continued the classic walk over the Seven Sisters and down into Cuckmere Haven, up to Exceat Bridge and back to Seaford Head before our descent into Seaford. We had such amazing views looking back east to the gleaming, brilliant white cliffs along to Beachy Head and the sea was a lovely shade of greenish blue, especially where it met the cliffs and mixed with the chalk. After Seaford there was only more walking for the indefatigable Mr Williams and myself and by now it was turning very hot and muggy indeed. We pushed on though up to Bishopstone, then across the Downs to the South Downs Way on the main ridge near Firle Beacon. After yet another bite to eat and more drink with a nice pause looking north with a delightful expansive view from the Downs we continued along the South Downs Way. We soon left it however to descend from the hills for the last time that day to cross a few fields into Berwick village and a very unplanned but welcome pub stop. Our final couple of miles saw us join the Vanguard Way and a final walk eastwards back to the station. A lovely but tiring day’s walk.