

## **CRC Isle of Wight Weekend 2022**

### **Friday 29 April**

After no club holidays for the past two years, there was a lot of excitement that the long awaited Isle of Wight holiday was finally happening, as 50 of us set off on a coach heading for the south coast. We were kept entertained by the usual quizzes, though football teams and makes of cars weren't easy for everyone! Then the holiday really got going with King Alfred the Great, who marked our starting point for a couple of hours wandering around the historic city of Winchester, before a warm and pleasant sailing from Portsmouth to Fishbourne.

In the evening we were entertained to an interesting talk entitled "A Wilder Wight" given by Jamie from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.

### **Saturday 30 April**

#### **A Walk – Ryde to Sandown (12 miles)**

There were just four of us tempted by the walk around the coast path from Ryde to Sandown. It was a varied walk, with a stop for coffee next to a 13<sup>th</sup> century church tower at St Helens, a walk across Bembridge harbour over the causeway, and then coming across a group of noisy walkers (otherwise known as the B group) eating ice creams on the Yarborough Monument on Culver Down! (Carol)



#### **B Walk - Brading to Sandown via Bembridge (8 miles)**



14 of us set out from the Saxon church in Brading. We walked across the marshes, popular with bird watchers. We were lucky to sight a rare little ringed plover. Then on to our first stop on the village green in St Helens, claimed to be the largest in England! Onwards across Bembridge harbour causeway and on to Bembridge windmill which unfortunately was closed, but nevertheless lovely to see. We had a welcome lunch stop at Whitecliff bay, some on the beach while others stayed on top. I think they were preparing for the assault on Culver Down! Whilst enjoying an ice cream by the monument we were overtaken by the A walkers, very keen to beat us back to Sandown!! (Gordon and Jenny)

## **C Walk - Havenstreet to Ryde (6 miles)**

Saturday was a bright warm sunny day to set us up for a good weekend of company and walking. A drive through some of the Isle of Wight's beauty spots brought us to the inland village of Havenstreet, start of our walk. Varied paths, pleasant wooded area and open fields brought us to Quarr Abbey, a Benedictine monastery. First stop for most was the cafe, a pleasant garden area to refuel before visiting the grounds, visitor centre and Abbey, a truly stunning constructed building of 2 million red Belgium bricks. Onwards to Ryde via the Old Quarr Road now the coast path for some sightseeing and the return journey by bus or inland train to Sandown. (Mary and Dave)



## **Sunday 1 May**

### **A walk – Tennyson Trail (9.5 miles)**

A climb through forest gave access to the open, airy down with views somewhat restricted by the damp, grey day. After lunching with the B group at Freshwater, two further steady grassy ascents brought us to the mish-mash of military detritus and tourist paraphernalia that the natural beauties of the Needles and Alum Bay have to contend with. (David)

### **B walk – Headon Warren, Tennyson Down and the Needles Headland (7.5 miles)**

The B party were dropped off at Alum Bay for a 7.5 mile challenging circular walk to Headon Warren, Tennyson Down and the Needles Headland. Leaving the Needles Pleasure park we started with a strenuous climb to Headon Warren with fine views of the Needles on the way. Here was a great place to view the chalk downs and the Solent but unfortunately the weather today was rather misty. We then descended onto the Tennyson trail near to a replica of Nonesuch Beacon. This was one of a chain of Beacons across the island that were lit to warn of impending invasions around 1638. We then continued on the Tennyson trail for another mile before going inland towards the village of Farringford. The Victorian Poet Laureate, Alfred Lord

Tennyson lived here for 39 years before his death in 1892. The footpath now passed under a wooden bridge called 'Tennyson's Bridge' before reaching the outskirts of Freshwater. Here we visited the only thatched Church on the IOW called St Agnes (built 1900's) before making our way down to the coast at Freshwater for lunch.

After lunch we re-joined the Tennyson trail starting with a steady climb to the highest point on the chalk cliffs at Tennyson Monument (147m) - a Cornish granite cross that was erected to his memory in 1897. We then followed the cliff top path towards the Coastguard station before reaching the Needles New Battery. This was built in 1890s and was used in an unlikely role in Britain's secret Space age programme in 20<sup>th</sup> century as a Rocket test site. It secretly tested rockets in 1950s and 1970s called Black Knight and Black Arrow. We followed the signs to the Needles viewpoint to view the iconic Needles. A great place to see a series of chalk stacks sticking up out of the sea. There were original 4 stacks but now only 3 stand, the missing one called Lot's Wife collapsed in 1764 by a great storm. We then followed the path down to the Needles Old Battery, a military fort commissioned by Lord Palmerston in 1862 to protect the Solent from the French. The invasion never came therefore became known as one of Palmerston Follies. Finally we made our way back to our starting point at the Needles Pleasure park with spectacular views of Alum Bay for its multi-coloured sand cliffs on the way.



## Monday 2 May

### A walk – A 'Crafty' Long Walk (somewhat more than 10.5 miles)

The late Barry Powney of our club would have been amused at our walks on this holiday since he himself, never did any walkovers! I have been to the island quite a few times before and on my last trip, I went looking for a Craft Village at Arreton Barns, which is just south of Newport. I thought that the complex was great with lots of interest and after our visit we drove back along a high ridge with brilliant views. Prior to the trip, there was some canvassing from the organizers for suitable walks and I worked out that I could easily? walk out to Arreton from Sandown and back along my interesting ridge, with an estimated total for the day of about ten miles.

There were only five of us doing the walk but the morning went quite well along good tracks, of which the IOW has almost exemplary waymarking. However my estimated five miles for the morning turned out to be nearer six. One of our number had originally thought of taking a bus back after the morning, but having kept the leader company with a couple of pints at the on site pub, he decided to keep walking in the

afternoon. We had enjoyed a really good stop at the centre with several different bands of Morris Dancers also performing.

Our route up to and along the ridge was on Access land which I thought should be easy walking but it was difficult in parts and we had to take to a higher lane which increased the distance. We eventually hit another road leading to the village of Brading, where we knew there were regular buses going back to Sandown, so my drinking friend, escorted by another, managed to cadge a lift into Brading. The remaining three of us continued on for the last few miles where we had a final sting in the tail as we found a proposed footpath closed and had to divert. Modesty does not allow me to mention our finished mileage, but after our usual good dinner and a few more drinks, good health was certainly restored. (Guy)

### **B walk (allegedly) - Nanson Hill to Blackgang Chine (more than 7.25 miles)**

It looked straightforward on the map. Get on the coast path and keep the sea on the left. We started steeply downhill, then saw "path closed due to landslip". A steep climb back up, squeezing through the rock face, almost back to where we started. We followed the diversion down to the coast path. Shortly we came across another "path closed due to landslip" sign. Up we went again before down to reach the sea at Ventnor. Two hours to do what was supposed to be 1½ miles!

Thankfully the seafront at Ventnor was flat, enabling everyone to get their breath back before climbing up and down to reach Steephill Cove and the edge of the Botanic Gardens. The path led us between two hedges to a well earned lunch break on open cliffs above a sparkling blue sea.

After lunch, a treat, another climb! This time through the village of St Lawrence onto a relatively gentle high cliff top path. Tom saw a red squirrel and we all enjoyed views of St Catherine's Point. Finally, a welcome sight - the coach in the car park - and we were on time!

We were delighted all 17 walkers finished this escapade in one piece and thank everyone for their patience. (Chris and Sue)

### **C walk – Luccombe and Bonchurch Landslide (5.6 miles)**

On Monday 9 of us did a very varied 5 mile walk, including the Bonchurch Landslip. It had about 1000 feet of ascent, over 200 steps going down through the Devils Chimney, lots of interesting houses and gardens in the villages, and views across the whole island from the viewpoint on Luccombe Down near the Radar Station. The walk is on the National Trust website and well worth doing if you are there again.



See details on <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/ventnor-downs/trails/down-south-luccombe-and-the-landslip-walk>. (Angela)

### **Tuesday 3 May**

After another calm, though less sunny, crossing of the Solent, we headed back home and stopped in the market town of Marlborough, where amongst other local eateries The Polly Tea Rooms proved to be a popular choice for lunch.

### **And also**

Besides the above walks, there were visits to Osborne House, Carisbrooke Castle, and Ventnor Botanic Gardens, as well as some ad hoc shortened versions of the programmed walks. After some lovely dinners in the hotel, the evenings included strolls along the pier (giving the impression of stepping back some 40 years in time!), walks along the seafront (including all the way to Shanklin for some people, so maybe the day walks were too short!) and drinks in local pubs, including The Castle, which was decorated with suits of armour, skeletons and various body parts!

The whole trip was well planned and organised by David and Liz. And we were once again driven by Mike for the coach company Bevans, who as on previous holidays was always cheerful, helpful, and full of interesting nuggets of information about the places we were driving past (such as where Oliver Cromwell's grandson is buried!).

We are now looking forward to Sidmouth next year!