

Sevenoaks Ramblers

Devil's Dyke and Chattri Memorial Loop - 12.7 miles

Sunday, 9th August

As the group of eleven ramblers began to gather in the small car park opposite Saddlescombe Farm, some peeled off to take refreshment and shelter at the delightful Wildflower Café while others began to toast in the building heat and chalk-reflected sunlight. The ascent up the spectacular Devil's Dyke, a 100-metre deep V-shaped dry valley formed by solifluction (you'll have to look that up) and river erosion, to Fulking Hill (206m) was gruelling. But the going was relatively flat as the party then headed east through terrain which resembled more Steinbeck's dustbowl of the mid-west than the usual lush pastures of the South Downs.

After several 'hydration breaks', the group turned north to reach the often overlooked Chattri Memorial, unveiled in 1921 in memory of 74 Indian soldiers who died in military hospitals in and around Brighton between 1914 and 1916. The site offered superb views to the south as well as a tranquil spot to consume lunch.

Refreshed, the eleven walkers began a short and benign ascent to an intersection of the South Downs Way which they joined to start the descent west past a golf course to the village of Pyecombe whose beautiful Church of the Transfiguration (built around 1170) has offered refreshment and refuge (and now smart loos) to travellers for centuries.

Crossing the A23, the party successfully and finally negotiated ascent to and descent from West Hill in time, such was the cracking walking pace it had set, to consume some well-earned and very welcome refreshment at the Wildflower Café - before the resident chickens did and the cafe closed. The very hot conditions and frequent undulations had made it seem we had walked more than 13 miles, but all were agreed it had been worth it and that the South Downs, despite its scorched condition on the day, had lost none of its allure.



