

## June 2011 Newsletter

### WATTON RAMBLERS PROGRAMME OF EVENTS June-July 2011

| <b>DATE</b>  | <b>VENUE/DESCRIPTION</b>   | <b>LEADER</b>                         |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Monday 30<br/>May 9.30am</b>                      | full-day walk in the Offley area (see May newsletter for full details<br><b>lunch menu attached– please look at this if possible prior to Monday.</b>  | <b>Peter Aknai</b><br>01920 830614    |
| <b>Sunday 5<sup>th</sup><br/>June, 9am</b>           | Hertfordshire Way second leg, lunch details to be advised. John says that all walkers are welcome, whether intending to walk the entire Hertfordshire Way or just selected legs of it.   | <b>John Woodland</b><br>07829 820225  |
| <b>Saturday 11<sup>th</sup><br/>June, 9.30am</b>     | The full-day walk will be in the Aldenham/ Letchmore Heath area and although within the M25 is surprisingly rural. The total distance is about 10 miles but is divided into a morning walk of 6 miles and one of 4 miles in the afternoon. The start of both sections will be the 'Round Bush' pub at Aldenham, WD25 8BG where lunch is available, comprising main meals or lighter dishes but, unfortunately, probably not sandwiches on a Saturday. Points of interest include two public schools, crossing the active runway at Elstree aerodrome, country houses and the River Colne.<br>We will meet as usual at the sports field at 9.30 a.m. and directions will be given to drivers. It is possible to do either half of the walk only but anyone wishing to do this will have to make their own transport arrangements.'<br><b>Would you please let Ray know by Wednesday, 8th June if you intend to be there for lunch, as he has to book a table.</b> | <b>Ray Everett</b><br>01920 830 137   |
| <b>Wednesday<br/>15<sup>th</sup> June<br/>7.30pm</b> | Evening walk in the Watton area  | <b>George Marven</b><br>01920 411 098 |
| <b>Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup><br/>July, 9.30am</b>        | Full-day walk, Pirton  | <b>Derek Henley</b>                   |
| <b>Thursday 21<sup>st</sup><br/>July, 7.30pm</b>     | Evening walk, Watton area  | <b>Antony Everett</b>                 |
| <b>Saturday 30<sup>th</sup><br/>July, 9.30am</b>     | Full-day walk, West Stevenage  | <b>Maurice Gordon</b>                 |

## **Description of recent walks/events**

**Tuesday May 17<sup>th</sup> saw the first evening walk of the year (led by Linda Thurlow).**

10 walkers gathered on a gloomy but warm evening for a walk in the countryside of Watton. We made our way to Raffin Green via Broomhall Farm and then along the bridal way to Bramfield Woods and back down to Perrywood Farm, Watkins Hall Farm and back into Watton as the light was fading rapidly. Several walkers then stopped at the George for liquid refreshments.

### **Watton Ramblers Trip to Cork**

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> May to Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2011 (reported by Linda Thurlow).**

Eleven Watton Ramblers took part in the trip, eight flying from Stanstead and three from Heathrow.

We hired cars from the airport and stayed four nights at Isaacs Hotel on MacCurtain Street in Cork City.

After an early start, eight of us spent the morning in the town of Kinsale, some joining a historical tour of the town with a city guide and others exploring on their own. We all met up together at the hotel at lunchtime and after having checked in we enjoyed a self-guided walk of Cork city getting to know our whereabouts and savouring the historical sites, including the Opera house, St. Finn Barr's Cathedral, Fort Elizabeth, the waterways of the river Lea, the National Monument and the English Market. In the evening we went our separate ways to explore the gastronomic delights of the City.

After an early night we were ready to explore Ireland and decided to head to Ballycotton to enjoy a cliff top walk. Weather was bright and windy with some showers but this did not stop us enjoying an exhilarating walk alongside the Atlantic Ocean returning to the village by an inland route which afforded us panoramic views over the headland and across the Bay. After a picnic lunch we enjoyed a cup of tea in the village and explored the harbour area with its huge trawlers, lifeboat and numerous pleasure boats bobbing on the water and gazed out to the Lighthouse on the nearby island. Then we were off to explore Cobh, the town of Titanic fame. Situated on the top of the River Lea's estuary, the deep water is a safe haven for liners. This was the last port of call for the Titanic before it hit the iceberg. The survivors and the dead from the Lusitania which was torpedoed by the Germans in WW1 were brought ashore here. Along the shoreline there are numerous plaques and memorials depicting these and other events. Out in the water is Spike Island which was formally a prison. We ascended the hill to St. Coleman's Cathedral and were rewarded with panoramic views over the sea and a peep into the magnificent cathedral. Finding the Preacher's steps, where John Wesley had once preached (although it has been said that he did not like the town), we descended to the quayside to the car and back to Cork. Once again we split into smaller groups to go and find something to eat. We all met up later to sample the local brew and to enjoy some traditional Irish music at the Corner House not far from the Hotel.

Thursday morning dawned bright and sunny and we set off to explore Muckross Lake in County Kerry near Killarney. After quite a long drive we arrived at the National Park and decided to split into two groups – one doing the longer walk around the lake and the other exploring the parkland and the Torc waterfall. The weather was warm and sunny with the

occasional light shower. Both groups enjoyed the surroundings of the Park so beautiful with the simmering sun on the two lakes of Lake Muckross and Lough Leanne both surrounded by the high Torc mountains and the cascading waters of the Torc waterfall.

All too soon it was time to return to Cork. However, we were all excited by the fact that we had been invited to the home of our Irish friend Mary's sister, Catherine, at Ballincollig. And what a welcome we received! Martin, Catherine's husband, and her children, Caile, Daniel and David made us feel very much at home. We were all very moved by our visit to Mary's grave, where she is interred with her grandparents. The spot is very serene, set on the hillside in a very well-tended cemetery and on this evening was basking in the warm evening sun. On returning to the house we were treated to a wonderful meal cooked by Catherine and enjoyed marvellous Irish hospitality from all the family. It was very difficult to drag ourselves away from such a friendly place.

On Friday morning we decided to make for Millstreet County Park not far from Macroom which we had passed the day before. Today the wind was a little cooler and we had more showers but this did not deter us from enjoying a walk in the Park along the streams, past the Deer enclosures and up onto the moorland above. The views over the moors and across to the foreboding hills were wonderful being able to watch the rain sweep in and away from us. Descending from the moorland down a very steep path we arrived at the lake and made our way into the visitor centre just before another sharp shower. Here we enjoyed a warm drink before visiting the huge new water feature (based on one in Brussels) and the rest of the gardens. On the way back to Cork we drove by Blarney Castle in order to prepare for our visit the next day.

We returned back to the hotel early in order to prepare for our group meal at the Hotel to which we had invited Catherine and Martin as a thank-you for their great hospitality of the previous evening. The food in the restaurant was very good and spirits were very high. To finish the evening we all went to another music venue, SinE, where we enjoyed traditional Irish music. There were fiddles, guitars, Irish pipes and even spoons being played. The pub was full of people enjoying themselves; the music was very lively and soon had everyone's toes tapping to the beat. It was a fun evening and a great way to spend some of our last hours in Cork.

Saturday was another sunny start. We checked out of the hotel and made our way to Blarney Castle where we met Catherine. We went into the Castle and all made it up the steep steps to the top to the Blarney stone where most of us went through the ritual of lying on our backs and reaching down to kiss the stone with the help of two iron bars and one Irishman holding on to you for dear life. Some of the expressions on the photos afterwards showed the sheer fright of some of us when we were doing this! Still we couldn't come to Cork and not kiss the Blarney stone could we? The gardens around the Castle are a delight. We enjoyed a good walk around the lake and back to the castle and some of the group enjoyed the Rock garden, the poison garden (it's surprising how many plants are poisonous if you eat the wrong part (Rhubarb leaves and the roots of hellebores! for example), and the Belgian borders full of the most colourful azaleas.

After lunch we made our way back through Cork and out past the airport to Kinsale for a cliff top walk out to Charles Fort on the Headland although we did not have time to explore the fort itself. We were treated to magnificent views of the estuary and it was obvious why the town had become so important to the British at the time of the Armada with the sheltered harbour and the protection of the two headlands on the estuary which also guarded one of the shipping routes from America back to England.

All too soon we were back in Kinsale and saying our goodbyes to Catherine wishing her well and hoping the family will visit us all in England in August. And then sadly back to the Airport to catch our flights home.

Our thanks go to Bob, Julie and Antony for volunteering to drive the cars. We had a wonderful few days in Ireland and it was a good way to see the country. Of course our visit to Catherine and her family was the highlight of our stay and although Mary is no longer with us we have inherited her family and we hope that the links will grow even stronger. Thank you Mary, our lovely, lively Irish Friend.

*Those of us on this trip owe a debt of gratitude to all those who did so much to organise every detail, collect and pay all the monies, and drive the cars. We had a great time! No doubt, a good supply of photos will soon be available on the Web in case you are curious what we got up to. [But in the meantime look on p13 of this week's Mercury!](#)*  
*Ed.*

### **About this newsletter**

The copy date for this newsletter is the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month. Please send all walk descriptions, announcements, changes in walk arrangements, changes in contact details, and general news-worthy items to Peter Aknai ([peter.aknai@ntlworld.com](mailto:peter.aknai@ntlworld.com) or phone 01920 830 614). Your comments or suggestions for improvements to this newsletter are also very welcome; please email or phone Peter as above.

**Walk leaders please note: If you change any walk details after the copy date, you will need to inform the membership directly.**