

# The Medway Walking Festival – May 2007

## HALLING WALKS

### – FROM THE COMMUNITY CENTRE IN HIGH STREET

There is limited space for parking behind the Community Centre.

Paths to the crest of the North Downs are steep and can be muddy.

Walking boots - even walking stick - are recommended.

An Ordnance map and a compass are a wise precaution for the longer walks.

### WALK 1 – ½/1 mile. Easy

Turn down Ferry Road by church to river. Follow pavement [*with views across the River Medway to Wouldham marshes. The line of North Downs across the river carries the North Downs Way*] to stile for Halling Parish Marsh. Follow riverside path skirting marsh to stile at bottom end of Marsh Road. [*There is the option here of continuing round the riverbank path (RS319), but a return by the same route is necessary until RS320 is reinstated*]. Turn up Marsh Road (RS219) – past gate – to gap in trees opposite Southern Water. Walk through park, following path (a) to east side of houses to Maximilian Drive (and back to Community Centre), or (b) between houses to Low Meadow, and left to Maximilian Drive (and back to Community Centre). [*Until comparatively recently, a ferry boat connected Ferry Road with the Wouldham side of the river, and was once much used by workmen and travellers. This is about the first fordable part of the River Medway, and it was about here that the Claudian invasion of Britain took place circa AD43, with elephants and even camels to be seen in Halling and Snodland! A monument marks a Roman crossing on the Burham side of the river at Snodland*].

### WALK 2 – 2 miles. Moderate

Turn down Ferry Road by church to river. In a southerly direction, follow the riverside path for 400 yards to reach the last of the houses. [*Behind the church, see the (scant) remains of Halling Palace lived in by the Bishop of Rochester in the late 1100s. See herons and cormorants 'fishing' at the river's bend. Only a few miles upstream are Allington Locks where salt water of the River Medway meets fresh water*]. Turn up Howlesmere Close (near Herying Close), go past school on left, and reach High Street. Turn left, and follow road to new rounda-

bout. On west side of roundabout, follow the Ticker path (RS218) for ¾ mile slightly up hill to reach houses (Meadow Crescent) in Upper Halling. Turn right (east), and follow Plough path (RS218) down to Lower Halling. [*This has deep pits that once fuelled the cement industry, with (remains of) metal rails for wagons leading to the riverside for transportation of chalk and lime to sailing barges destined for the River Thames. From the upper part of the Plough path, there are impressive views along the River Medway to the disused cement factory, the M2 motorway bridge and beyond to Rochester and Grain*]. Cross A228 carefully, and go between houses to reach High Street. Turn left (and back to Community Centre).

### **WALK 3** – 2-2½ miles. Moderate – with strenuous option

Turn left outside Community Centre, and walk 200 yards to just past Sylvestre Close. Turn right between houses – cross (carefully) A228. Straight ahead is Plough path (RS218). Go gently up hill for ½ mile to reach Meadow Crescent – and on to Pilgrims Way [*Yes, Chaucer’s pilgrims’ route to London/Canterbury hugging the foot of the North Downs*] at crossroads by former (Black Boy) pub. Walk ahead up Chapel Lane to where road bends left uphill. [*There is the option here of a wooded and wonderfully scenic but sterner walk by continuing straight ahead 300 yards, and bearing right and up to crest of the hills – and down the corresponding path to Court Farm*] Turn right here to walk (north) along RS213 to Court Farm. Turn right (east), and walk down to and cross Pilgrims Way (near old Robin Hood/Pilgrim’s Rest pub.) Follow Vicarage Road 300 yards to gap on right to take you along the Cam path (RS222) to bridge over A228, and down to High Street. Turn right (and back to Community Centre).

### **WALK 4** – 4 miles. Strenuous

Follow **Walk 3** to Pilgrims Way by former (Black Boy) pub. [*Charles II in his early years on the run was known, on account of his swarthy appearance and disguise, as the ‘Black Boy’*]. Turn left along Pilgrims Way, and follow it for 400 yards to Lad’s Farm (where road bends sharply to east). Follow footpath alongside Lad’s Farm in direction of North Downs. Walk up steeply to crest of hills (passing Mount Ephraim pit on right – with wonderful views to Happy Valley woods and Holly Hill) for ¾ mile to T-junction of footpaths in woods. Turn right for 100 yards. Follow the minor metalled road in a northerly direction for 400 yards to where North Downs Way path is signed on right. Follow the North Downs Way through woods, across an open field, and into woods again

as far as a ‘crossroads’ of paths, about 1 mile. Turn half right and down hill to reach Court Farm. Then, as **Walk 3**, walk back to Community Centre. [*The area between the Cam path (RS222) and the Plough path was once the scene of vitally important war-time activity, the ‘Pluto line’ passing through here with fuel piped to the south coast for the invasion of Europe*].

## **WALK 5** – 4 miles. Strenuous

Turn right outside Community Centre, and walk ½ mile along High Street (past newspaper shop) and along Kent Road to roundabout by allotments. Go up steps by roundabout for RS201. Proceed over metal bridge alongside closed factory and ‘Blue Lake’ [*the disused factory and chimney was once ‘Rugby’, and a major local employer, but the complex is now owned by Cemex, with a limited operation on the riverside of the A228. The ‘Blue Lake’, once dredged mechanically for chalk, is a privately owned nature reserve. It gets its ‘blue’ name from the phenomenon of sunlight reflected by chalk particles suspended in the clear, 45m deep water, and is said to be fed by underground streams from as far away as the Chilterns*] and follow up to Pilgrims Way. Turn left along road for 100 yards. Follow signed RS201 footpath between trees, over stile, and up hill for ½ mile to crest of hills – to meet the long-distance national trail, the North Downs Way. [*From here, it is about 70 miles to Farnham, and about 65 miles to Dover via the Canterbury loop*]. Turn left. After ¾ mile, meet ‘crossroads’ of **Walk 4**, and follow **Walk 4** back to Community Centre.

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Halling is a splendid base (with a railway station) from which to explore a near-wilderness network of connecting paths to Holly Hill [*no higher point to the east in Kent*], Trottiscliffe village [*3000BC Long Barrow*], Cuxton and Cobham woods, and Luddesdown. There will be many fine views, birds, animals, flowers, plants and trees to see.

**Good walking!**

