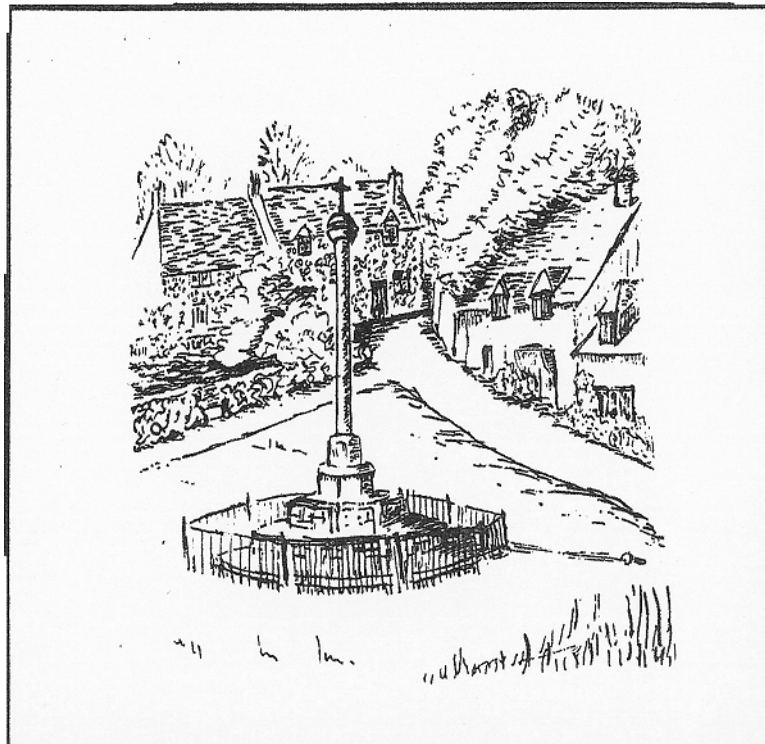


THE BEACHYHEAD WALK

Starting in East Dean
Estimated time from start to finish 1hr 30 minutes

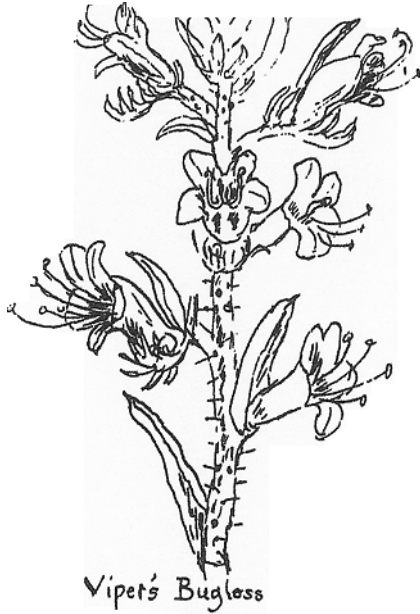


1.) Welcome to Beachy Head and to a fabulous walk. You can start at East Dean (no 1) or at Birling Gap (no 6) This starts at the East Dean Village Hall / Tiger Car Park, on Gilbert's Drive.

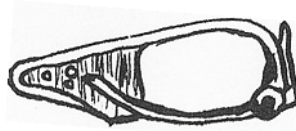
In the car park proceed to the side of a high flint wall and stop to admire the lovely old bow-windowed house behind the wall, called "The Dipperays", built in about 1750.

2) A legend persists that James Dipperay was a successful gentleman smuggler who amassed a sizeable fortune from his illicit trading. He and his confederates were caught red-handed by the Excise Men he turned Kings Evidence, was set free, and was able to build his house and enjoy his fortune whilst his comrades were transported for life. There is a plaque to his memory on the left-hand side of the Chancel in East Dean Church

Several large trees overhang the flint wall on your right, including ~ fine specimen of Horse Chestnut, a rather uncommon tree on this downland chalky soil.



3) Before turning right up towards the village green observe New House Farm on the left-hand side. This is on a piece of land once called Glebe Field as it was owned by the Church for farming in the Middle Ages. A Roman brooch was dug up in this field by a local inhabitant a few years ago and was given to the Sussex Archaeological Society at Lewes. These buildings belong to the Gilbert Estate and are due to be converted into five 1 bedroom cottages and two 2 bedroom apartments. A coffee shop will also open in March 2006 here.



As you approach the Tiger Inn and the Village Green you will see the War Memorial. This has the appearance of an ancient village cross, and was erected after the 1914-18 War, the railings being hand-made by the last village blacksmith.

The name "Tiger" is probably taken from the local manor house family's coat of arms which depicts a leopard. Neither animal would have been seen in the 15th Century, so the mistake is a possibility. One of the firebacks in the public bar is inscribed 1622, and The Tiger is referred to as a 15th Century Inn. 17th Century records state that there was a disused "malthouse" in East Dean, which may possibly refer to the Tiger Inn, and which may have been suppressed during Cromwell's reign.



The Inn was known to be used as a base for smugglers and by far more sinister "wreckers" who showed bogus lights on shore at night to lure storm-driven vessels to destruction. It was customary for these wreckers to throw back into the sea any of the crew who escaped the destruction of the ship. The three cottages adjoining the Tiger were used as barracks during the Napoleonic wars and are part of the Gilbert Estate and are subject of a Preservation Order.

4. Proceed up the side of a large barn and cross the road at the top outside the Village Shop and Post Office. Before turning left towards Went way, notice the firemarks above the cottages next to the shop. These gave the emblem of the Sun Insurance Company 1792, and the Kent Fire Insurance about 1805, so that, if the houses caught fire, one would be saved by the Sun and the other by the Kent Fire Brigade, but not vice versa!

Went Way, meaning "wander" or "meander" is the oldest road in the district, and was known as the King's Highway, with lines of telegraph posts conveying wires for the first cross-Channel cable which entered the sea at Birline Gap. Along Went Way have passed Neolithic men, Saxons, Romans, pedlars, mariners, smugglers, modern hikers, lovers, pleasure-seekers, and now you!

The old School House on the right still retains the old bell. It was built in 1850 by the daughter of Mrs. Mary Davies-Gilbert who started an agricultural school, teaching digging, milking and stalling, alongside the three Rs. This early school had failed, but the 1850 school continued until the declining village population caused it to be closed in 1964.

Proceed along Went Way and glance at the Old Bakehouse, now a private residence, which once served the whole village and still retains the bricked-up ovens. It was once the home of the priests-in-charge of the East Dean Church.

This is a list of some of the flowers which can be seen on our walk:-

Betony
Bindweed
Birdsfoot Trefoil
Buttercup
Clover
Cowslip
Common Vetch
Daisy

Bee Orchid
Purple Orchid
Roundheaded Rampion
Scabious
Scarlet Pimpernel
Self Heal
Speedwell
stitchwort

Dandelion
Forget-me-not
Ground Ivy
Heartsease
Thyme
Violet
Viper's Bugloss
White Campion

Honeysuckle
Ivy



Knapweed
Meadowsweet



This is a list of Trees and Shrubs which can be seen our walk:-

Ash
Hawthorn
Black Bryony
Blackberry
Blackthorn
Cedar

Dog Rose
Dewberry
Elder
Elm
Field Maple
Gorse
Honeysuckle
Horse Chestnut

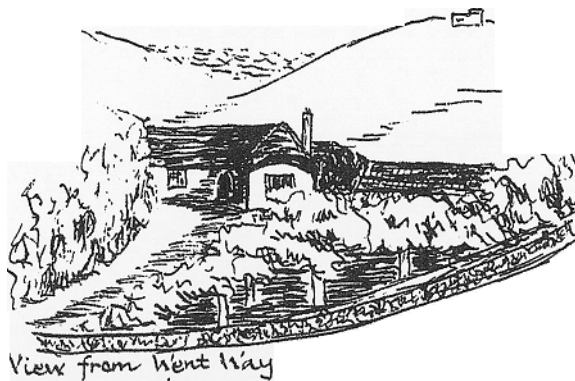
Monteray Cypress
Privet
Sweet Briar
Sycamore
Traveller's Joy
Wayfaring Tree
Wild Gooseberry
Yew



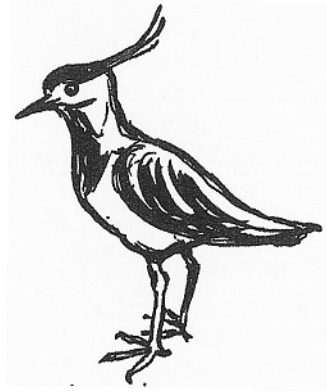
Continue along the road until you reach the five-barred gate, but turn to look left at the large flint house called "Underhill" .This was used in the 16th Century for farm business when the present Birling Manor House was built by a yeoman farmer of the Collingham family.

5. Enter the gate or climb the stile and you are immediately on the first of the Seven Sisters known as Went Hill. Take the upward winding pathway straight ahead and climb through a steep wooded area to a seat on the right-hand side. Here you may be lucky enough to hear the yaffle of a green woodpecker and in springtime the call of the cuckoo.

Search in front of the seat for a green mound and you will have discovered the foundation of one of the first telegraph posts referred to earlier. From here you have a splendid view of East Dean Village and the post-war development of residential houses. To the South you can see the Manor House nestling in the valley and beyond the landmark of an old lighthouse known as Belle Tout, your first glimpse of the sea.



Continue upwards and pass a red barn on your left-hand side and branch towards your right until you meet a well-defined track leading towards the sea and open downland. Here the botanist and bird-watcher can be most observant. A combination of sheep-grazing over several hundred years, and a soil deficient in most plant nutrients, has allowed the development of the short, springy grassland through which *you* are now walking.



Lapwing

6. Leave the main path where it bends left and go through a gate and straight on towards the sea. Through another gate and proceed straight on down the path through scrubby gorse and blackberry brambles until you see a sun-lounge on your left. Almost immediately turn sharp left through a gateway on to a shingled road between bungalows, and walk parallel to the coastline until you meet the main road at Birling Gap. A bus service during summer months operates from here to Eastbourne and the Village, so the walk can finish at Birling Gap.



This is a list of BIRDS which can be on our-walk : -

Collard Dove
Cuckoo
Field Fare
Redstart
Black Redstart
Skylark
Bullfinch
stonechat
Chaffinch
Swallow
Greenfinch
Swift
Goldfinch

Tawny Owl
Blackheaded Gull
Song Thrush
Common Gull
Perigrin Falcon
Missel Thrush
Herring Gull
Great Tit
Great Black-backed Gull
Blue Tit
Lesser Black-backed Gull
Coal Tit
Green Woodpecker

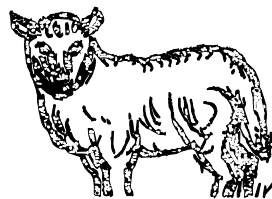
House martin
Kestrel
Lapwing
Longtail Tit
Tree Sparrow
Wheat ear
Whinchat
Linnet
Meadow Pipit
Pied Wagtail
Redwing
Hoopoe (rare)

7. Birling Gap is the only place of access to the sea between Eastbourne and Cuckmere Haven and there were originally eight coastguard cottages and a cable station here. The name Birling comes from a Saxon tribe "Beorls" who were raiders and settled at the site of Birling Manor - the best place to defend the village. The Gap was once defended by a gate 'and portcullis.

The Birling Gap Hotel was built by the Davies-Gilbert family for the benefit of a retiring Butler of theirs. Until they gave the Hotel, cottages and coastline to the National Trust in 1985, they used to place the steps into position at Easter time to enable the public access to the beach, during October they were taken away for the winter months as they were often destroyed by tempestuous seas and winter storms. The National Trust put the current steps into place, and these are brought back every few years as the cliff erodes.

Accounts exist of smuggling at the Gap, chiefly of spirits, Geneva, and brandy, In July 1828 a run of smuggled goods took place when thirty-seven tubs were landed by smugglers, They got twenty-five tubs away, but an alarm was made by the firing of blockade sentries, so the smugglers allowed about twelve tubs to fall to the bottom of the cliff. Other accounts mention Riding Officers with Dragoons and Lancers being called in to help Coastguards at West Birling.

Turn your back to the beach and pass the row of old Coastguard Cottages and by the Telephone kiosk turn sharp right and climb the hill to the Coastguard Lookout at the top of the cliff.



8) From the Coastguard Lookout a magnificent view of the Seven Sisters can be seen. Starting at Birling Gap their names, first bestowed by sailors and printed in the "mariners Mirrour in 1588, are:

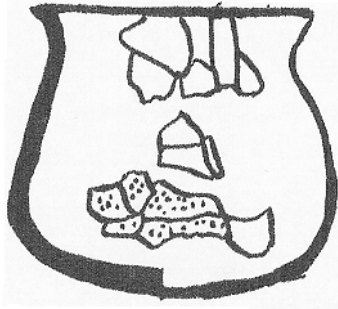
1. Went Hill Brow,
2. Baily's Brow
3. Flagstaff Point
4. Brass Point
5. Rough Brow
6. Short Brow
7. Haven Brow

The Coastguard Station at Birling Gap was built in about 1875. At the south end was a boat house, rocket house and watch room, long since fallen into the sea. The Coastguard Officer's house had to be demolished a few years ago owing to cliff falls. Built at the same time was a lookout hut on the top of the hill to the eastwards. After the War this also had to be demolished and replaced by a two-storey building. This is quite

up-to-date and is manned by auxiliaries, six in all. These men can be called on at any time for watch keeping. There are also more than twenty volunteers to be called upon for cliff rescue and life saving by breeches bouy. Previously these people were summoned by a maroon fired in the village.

9) Continue on the footpath and ascend towards Belle Tout, a lighthouse 'built in 1834 'by Mad Jack Fuller of Brightling, showing that his addiction to follies could give way to something far more practical. However, it proved not to be so because light did not beam over the sea and fogs over the oliff clouded it.

Archaeologists have excavated this area several times the latest as recently finding evidence of a very ancient Beaker Settlement also Bronze and iron age pottery



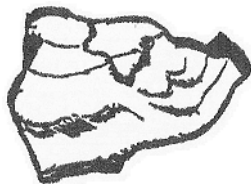
Iron Age pottery.

The name "Belle Tout" possibly comes from "Bael" , the Celtic god of war, and "Tout" the Celtic name for "Look-Out". It seems likely that it was once a hill-fortress, a considerable distance inland from the sea, an extensive head- land plateau of Upper Chalk occupying about 25 hectares and rising to a maximum of 80 metres. Post-holes were found in the chalk which could have outlined the original earthworks, but they appear to have been unfinished. This suggests it was only used as a temporary camp of refuge for families and cattle against marauding tribes.

The evidence of ramparts and many flint flakes suggests that there may have been a ditch or fosse on the outside. No natural water has been discovered until a large cliff fall in 1971. About 150 yards west of the Gap, revealed a deeply dug well-like structure. This matched a North German well thought to belong to the Beaker period, and early stone Age hand axes were found in the district.

During the 1939-45 War the lighthouse building was badly damaged, but has since been. rebuilt as a private residence and partly by the BBC for the filming of the "Lives and Loves of a She Devil". Story has it that tank gunners of the Canadian Army who trained on the Downs before the Normandy Invasions, got bored of missing a moving sail, towed behind a land rover and decided to blow the lighthouse off instead.

It was replaced as a lighthouse in 1903 when the modern Beacy Head Lighthouse was built.

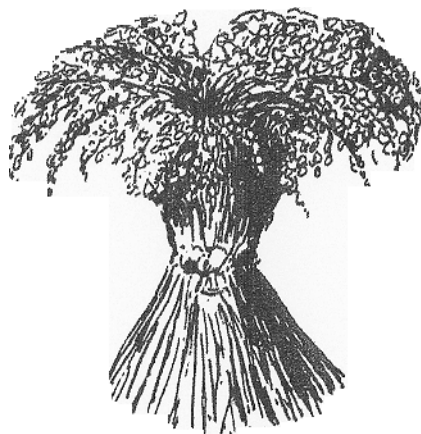


Follow the footpath round Belle Tout and keep on parallel to the cliff edge until another footpath joins on the left-hand side.

10. Before turning sharp left, pause to admire Beachy Head Cliffs and the Lighthouse Now you are turning away from the sea and making a rapid descent towards the road.

Cross over the road and find a stile beside a five-barred gate. A pleasant track, a Roman road, leads you through fields. Here the farmers used to specialise in the cultivation of winter wheat for seed export, particularly Kador and Sportsman. Other crops grown included Flanders wheat for bread, Sonya barley for whiskey, Flynor and Marris Huntsman for cattle feed. Now the farms belonging to the Gilbert Estate are farmed organically and under a Environmentally Sensitive Area management plan.

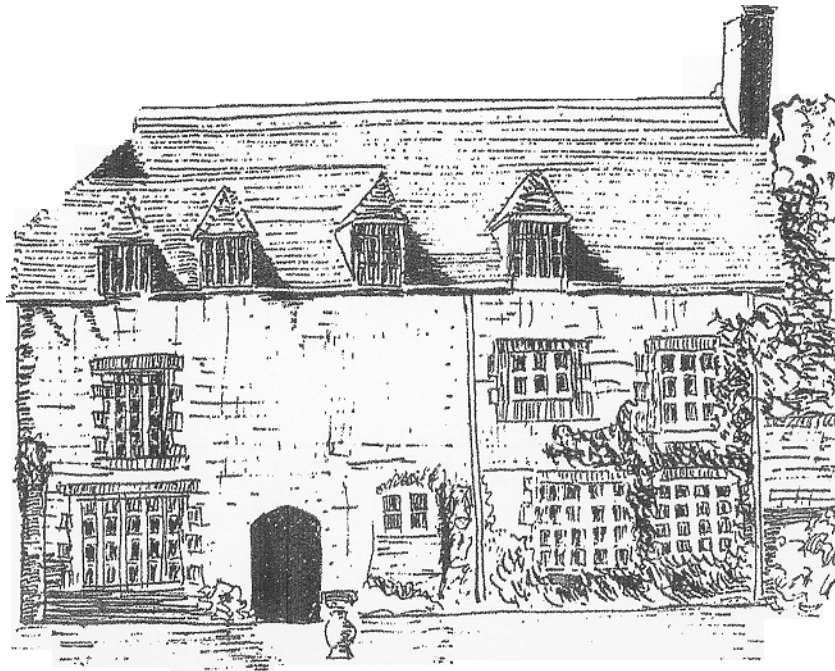
The third gate from the road is a hunting gate. Cross the main track leading to farm buildings and keep to the footpath. Farther along on the left there is a low flint wall built by Napoleonic prisoners~ of-war in 1793. Continue until you reach Birling Manor. .



11. Birling Manor was a homestead founded an off-shoot of the Saxon tribe of Beorls, who settled here soon after 490 A.D. The homestead straddled the dene and formed protection from raiders. The road still makes a right-angled' bend round the Manor. The Beorls must have fought Danes who landed here. At the Conquest the manor was part of the Rape of Pevensey, and Robert, Earl of Mortain was the first Norman Lord.

Bardolf Hall was prob;tibly built by William Bardolf about 1250. It has an early medieval window with trefoil heads and a stone seat in an anteroom which could have been a lady's bower. A licence to hold a Village Fair on the eve of St.Simon and St.Jude was granted to William Bardolf by Henry iii in 1267. This fair went on till the beginning of this 20th Century, 100 years later a farmers market has started in the village hall which runs every Wednesday throughout the year selling local produce and fresh food.

The Bardolf family appear in records up until the time of the Wars of the Roses, but Birling passed out of their possession in 1461. A document dated 1575 states that the manor was "an old thatched house in poor condition". This relates to the present Birling Manor which was probably built in Henry VII's reign, and added to and altered by the Carew family and many succeeding yeoman farmers..



Go through two bridle Gates and the pathway joins the Birling Gap road where you will come across the Beachyhead Farm and Sheep Centre. The largest collection of rare breed sheep can be found here as well as a refreshing cup of tea or coffee. There are other farm animals and children's activities. It's well worth a look.



Walk towards East Dean Village which is to the right along the road until you reach the small gate under a brick arch, on your left. Take the path leading to the East Dean Parish Church of St.Simon and St. Jude.

As you near the Church notice the flat tombstone on the left-hand side of the path. This is the grave of Parson Darby who saved many sailors from shipwreck by the light from the cave he made in the cliff near Beachy Head.

The oldest part of this Church is the Saxon Tower dating back before the Norman Conquest. This Tower then served a dual purpose, as a place of defence and refuge in times of emergency and as a Church oratory. Notice the Holy water stoup on the inside jamb of the doorway. This dates back to about 1350 A.D.

The Chancel and Nave are of Norman period dated about 1100 A.D. in the reign of Richard I. There have been many alterations and restorations since then. As recently as 1960 it became necessary to enlarge the Church, and excellent workmanship made the extension blend harmoniously with the older building, as you can see.

The window in the West wall is worth noticing. It was given by the children of the

Sunday School and shows many small creatures of the countryside. Notice also the Jacobean pulpit dated 1623.

Near the Tower entrance is a Sepulchral Cross Slab, bearing the coat of arms of the Bardolf family. These fragments were found some years ago under the floor of the Nave.

Leave the Churchyard by the Tapsell Gate. These swing gates are peculiar to Sussex, made by a John Tapsell. A suggestion is that they were made thus to rest coffins on, but a happier association with this gate is that still at weddings it is tied up with ribbon and the bridegroom has to lift his bride over it.

Now walk up the short hill back to the Village Green. On the right through the entrance of a private house can be seen the original tithe barn belonging to the Church. In the Spring the bank of this hill is ablaze with daffodils.

