



BEACHY HEAD RAMBLERS

Newsletter

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BHR FUTURE PLANS



Following the Government's relaxation of the rules, allowing up to 30 people to meet together for sporting and physical recreation activities, the BHR committee has been considering the best way forward in these uncertain times.

Whilst the future progress or otherwise of the Covid-19 crisis remains uncertain we must remain flexible in our plans. For the foreseeable future it is not envisaged that we can return to the system of having a bi-monthly walks programme featuring two walks a week. Rather we must adopt a 'holding pattern' for now in an effort to provide some activities for our members whilst keeping them, and our walk leaders, as safe as possible. We must also, of course, be flexible enough to adhere to the to the very fluid and ever-changing Covid-19 regulations.

These regulations will inevitably increase the responsibilities of our walk leaders, who as well as planning and leading walks will now also have to prepare risk assessments (a 'tick-box' exercise on a pre-printed form), take bookings for their walks (by text only), and keep track-and-trace information of all participants for the required period of 3 weeks. The committee are investigating online booking systems such as Eventbrite and Meet-Up with a view to possibly relieving walk leaders of this particular task in the longer term.

It is hoped, if we have enough willing leaders, to provide a group walk each week which members will have to pre-book. The day of the week will be entirely the choice of the leader, as will the decision of how many walkers to allow on each ramble. The committee recommends 15 as a maximum manageable number but it will be the leader's final decision. These walks are likely to be added on an ad hoc basis so it is unlikely to be possible to issue a Walks Programme to members. Walks will be notified via the [BHR website](#), the [BHR Facebook page](#), the [Ramblers website](#) and the Ramblers app which is free to download from the app stores of both Android and iPhones.

The contact mobile phone number given in the walk details will be for members to **text** their bookings (please don't phone). When booking, members must give their full names and contact phone numbers for track-and-trace purposes. A reply will then be sent either confirming your booking or informing you that the ramble is already fully booked. **Please do not arrive for a walk if you have not pre-booked.** If you need to cancel please do so promptly so that another member can take your place.

On the walk itself, the leader should appoint a back-marker and social distancing should be adhered to by all walkers during the ramble and on the breaks. It is recommended that members keep some hand gel in their rucksacks as hand washing facilities are unlikely to be available at lunch and coffee breaks. And after all that - enjoy your walk !



..... and the first walk is

The first and the last Summer evening walk of this season: Lucie will be leading a 5-mile evening walk on Thursday 27th August, starting at 6pm from Chiddingly village car park (TQ545143 / BN8 6HT) and finishing in the village's Six Bells pub.

This walk is limited to 10 participants + leader. To book your place send a text to 07928 666078 giving your full name and contact phone number for track & trace purposes. Please do not phone to book, and please do not attend the walk if you haven't pre-booked.

WALK LEADERS NEEDED

The Covid-19 pandemic will be with us all for the foreseeable future, and a number of BHR walk leaders have, for health security reasons, quite understandably expressed a reluctance to be leading group walks at this time. We of course respect their decision and hope to see them out at the front again in the not-too-distant future.

A lack of walk leaders was already a problem in pre-Covid times, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to put a full programme together. That problem is now exacerbated. We cannot hide the fact that being a walk leader at the moment carries with it an increase in both workload and responsibilities, but it can also be a rewarding experience. And all leaders are now free to choose the day of their walk and the number of people participating.

If any member feels that they can contribute at this time, please contact BHR Walks Co-ordinator Peter Slepokura at peterslepokura@gmail.com where they will receive a warm welcome! If you are not sure of your abilities and skills, take a look at the next item

NAVIGATION AND LEADERSHIP COURSES



Three experienced BHR walk leaders, Ian Wright, David Fry and Neil Holmes, will be leading a one-day course for members who might be thinking about leading walks but are hesitant about their skills. The course will start from first principles and cover various aspects from grid references, compass skills, bearings, timings and completing a route card, and is designed to give attendees the skills and confidence to lead in the future.

The morning session will be classroom based with a practical session on the Ashdown Forest in the afternoon. It will be limited to twelve people but more courses can be arranged to suit demand. Course dates will not be fixed until the Covid-19 regulations have relaxed sufficiently to allow them to take place, but in the short term it would be very useful to gauge interest among members. If you are interested and would like to receive more information as it becomes available please send an email to Ian at ianww54@gmail.com

EASTBOURNE WALKING FESTIVAL



Following the easing of Covid-19 restrictions and the increase in the group numbers allowed for sport and physical recreation, it is confirmed that the Eastbourne Walking Festival will be going ahead as planned. The ten-day festival, organised by Eastbourne Borough Council with the support of BHR and others, will take place from Friday September 18th to Sunday 27th.

There are 68 walks available, and whilst many are either too short or too urban to appeal to BHR members there are many other walks of decent length taking place on the Downs. Others will appeal to those with special interests such as archaeology or history.

All the walks are free of charge but in order to control numbers and comply with track-and-trace requirements they are ticketed and must be booked in advance. Social distancing and other Covid-19 requirements will be observed on all walks. Full details of the walks and booking facilities can be found at www.visiteastbourne.com/walking-festival/walks/walk-calendar

HIGH WEALD WALKING FESTIVAL



The annual High Weald Walking Festival, due in September, will not be taking place in its usual form this year. Instead, the organisers have put together a 'virtual' festival of self-guided walks available online. The 50 walks will only be available to download during the month of September, but brief details of each walk, showing the start-points on an interactive map, are already available at www.highwealdwalks.org. From 1st to 30th September the maps and directions for all the walks will be available to download in pdf format.

“HOPE GAP”

Hot on the heels of last month's cinema release of “Summerland”, filmed in Cuckmere Haven and featured in the July/August BHR newsletter, comes yet another film shot on location along our beautiful coastline. “Hope Gap” stars Bill Nighy and Annette Bening and was filmed in and around - guess - Hope Gap. The story centres on the fallout from the break-up of a 29-year marriage following an adulterous affair. Like “Summerland” it features sumptuous cinematography of the Seven Sisters and Seaford Head.

“Hope Gap” is in cinemas from August 28th and both films are also available to stream online from Curzon Home Cinema and other providers.

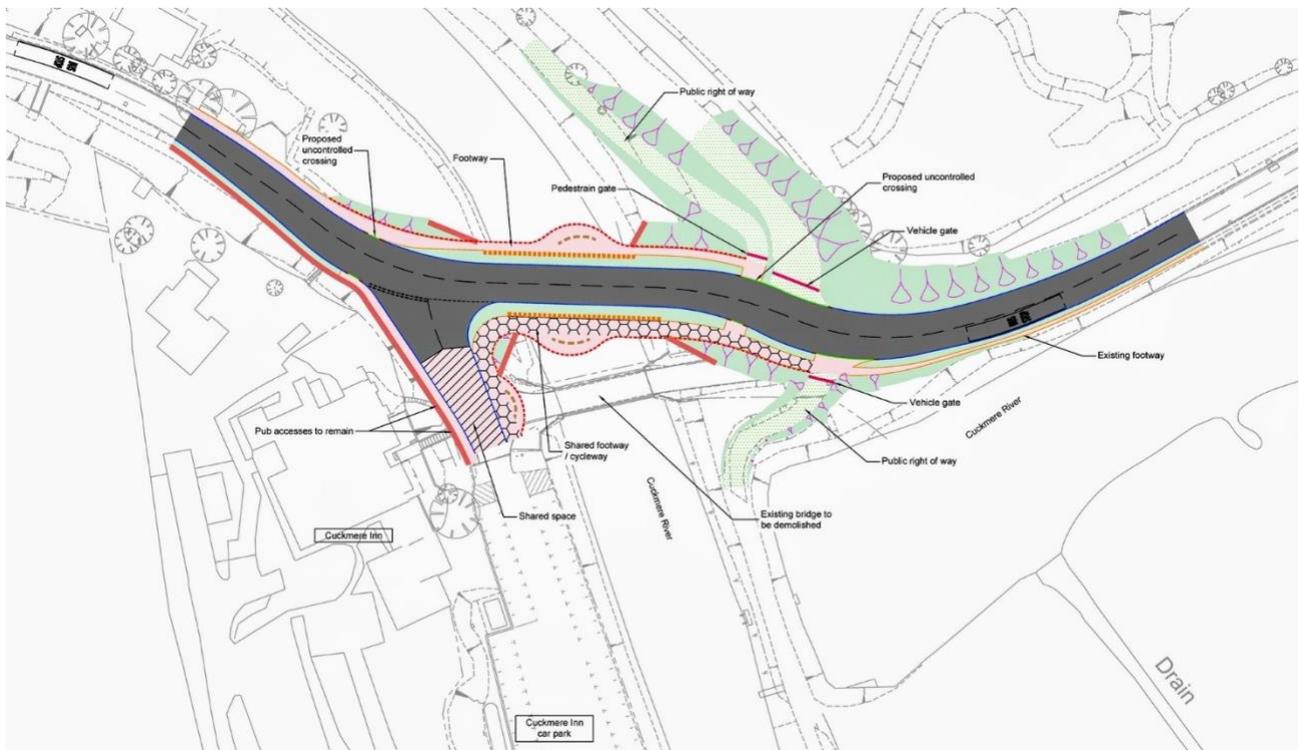


*Two cinematic views of the Seven Sisters:
Gemma Arteton in “Summerland”*



Annette Bening and Bill Nighy in “Hope Gap”

EXCEAT BRIDGE



BHR members will have received an email last month showing the plans for the widening and straightening of the notorious bottleneck at Exceat Bridge. The new layout, shown above, will incorporate barrier-protected footpaths on both sides of the bridge, which means walkers will no longer be expected to take their lives in their hands by crossing the A259 twice in order to cross over the river.

East Sussex County Council hopes that planning permission from the National Park Authority will be confirmed by Spring 2021, but with a construction cost in excess of 5 million pounds it remains to be seen whether ESCC can come up with the money in these post-Covid cash-strapped times.

HISTORY WALKS : EAST SUSSEX MARTELLO TOWERS

Martello towers are a familiar sight along our coast and many of them have become well-known landmarks. But those that remain are only a fraction of the original line of defensive towers. What is surprising, given the immense strength of their construction, is not that some remain but that so many have been lost:



A total of 103 defensive towers were erected along the South-East coast between 1805 and 1812, stretching from Aldeburgh in Suffolk to Seaford in East Sussex. Called 'Martello' after a coastal defence tower at Mortella Point in Corsica, they were built to counter Napoleon's plans for an invasion of England. Constructed with 3-metre thick walls and often surrounded by a ditch, they were between 9 and 12 metres high and typically contained 3 floors for men, armaments and provisions. They were topped by gun platforms containing a cannon mounted on a 360-degree carriage. The 103 towers were supplied with men, armoury and provisions by a further three forts, known as 'Redoubts', sited in Harwich, Dymchurch and Eastbourne.

By the time the construction of these defences was complete the threat from Napoleon had faded and the towers were never needed for their original purpose. Following Napoleon's surrender at Waterloo in 1815 and his incarceration by the British on the South Atlantic island of St. Helena, new uses began to be found for many of the Martello towers. Most commonly they were used by Excise men in the battle to combat smuggling, a major problem along the Kent and Sussex coasts at that time. Well in to the late 19th century many of the towers were homes to Coastguards and their families.

Of the 47 towers built along the East Sussex coast between Rye and Seaford, only ten remain today. The most easterly of these are two of the three towers erected to protect Rye Harbour and the sluices of the Royal Military Canal. No's 28 & 30 survive, 29 is gone. (The numbering system, confusingly, starts with no.1 in Folkestone and runs westward to no.74 in Seaford, the towers to the east of Folkestone being given letters instead of numbers).



Tower no.61

There is then a long gap between Rye and Normans Bay where no's 31 – 54 once stood. A few of these were demolished to make way for new developments but most were simply lost to the sea. At Normans Bay tower no.55 is now converted in to a private residence, but in the early 20th century it was used for wireless telegraphy experiments before becoming a Battery Observation Post during the Second World War. There are four more towers missing until we come to the three still standing at Pevensey Bay. All three have been converted, with 60 & 61 being private homes and 62 lying within a static caravan park.



No's 64 and 66 will be familiar sights to Eastbourne residents, with 64 standing on the shingle in front of the housing development between Pevensy Bay and Langney Point, and 66 on the shingle headland next to the entrance to Sovereign Harbour. As their numbering implies, there was once another tower between them. Both of these towers are now empty and unused, but the structures on the roof of no.66 tell the story of its earlier uses as a coastguard station and WW2 gun emplacement.

The next six towers positioned along Eastbourne seafront have all disappeared, but what certainly remains is Eastbourne Redoubt, one of the three forts which supplied the Martello towers. All three have survived and all are open to the public.

Towers no's 64 and 66

Eastbourne's Redoubt was built between 1805 and 1808 and consists of 24 casemates which open on to a central parade ground, topped by a gun platform originally housing eleven 24-pounder guns. It was built to house up to 350 men, but given the waning threat it is unlikely ever to have done so. Having missed its chance to be of use in the Napoleonic wars it was used as a military police headquarters and temporary jail in the first World War, and was requisitioned by the military in WW2 as an anti-aircraft gun platform and storage facility.



Eastbourne's Redoubt Fortress

From the 1950s to 70s the parade ground was home to the popular model village attraction, and later the casemates became regimental museums. This ended two years ago when Historic England declared the building unfit for such purpose due to extreme dampness. Currently closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic its future now seems to be as an events venue for live performances and cinema.

Next along the coast is Martello tower no.73, one of the best-known towers also known as the Wish Tower. Like the Redoubt, the Wish Tower has a colourful history.

Following the end of the Napoleonic threat it became a coastguard station until the 1860s, and by the late 19th century it housed a geological museum which lasted until the 1930s. During the second World War it was used as a gun battery and in the 1950s it narrowly escaped threatened demolition by becoming a listed monument.

In the 1970s it was a military museum and as recently as the 1990s it housed a puppet museum! It is now leased by Eastbourne Borough Council to the [Wish Tower Friends](#) who have long-term plans for its renovation. Currently closed due to Covid-19 it is usually open on certain dates for guided tours.



The Wish Tower inside and out

There is then a very long gap to tower no.74 on Seaford seafront. This is not due to the towers in between having been demolished, but to the fact that no. 74 was an afterthought. Originally planned to end at Eastbourne, the line of towers was extended by one extra tower to defend Tide Mills and the Port of Newhaven.

The War Department sold it in 1880 and during the next 90 years it passed through a number of hands and was used for various commercial purposes. During the 1930s the tower was a cafeteria while the moat floor was used as a roller-skating rink! Since the 1970s it has housed the popular [Seaford Museum](#) and has become the best-kept and most visited of all of East Sussex's remaining towers.



Visitors can view the interiors of the Martello Towers no's 73 and 74, but if you like the idea of spending the night in a tower you will need to travel all the way to the other end of the line: The tower at Aldeburgh in Suffolk has been converted by the Landmark Trust in to a holiday home for rent. It's yours for a mere £160 per night.  **AH**