



BEACHY HEAD RAMBLERS

Newsletter

November / December 2020

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[CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE UP-TO-DATE WALKS PROGRAMME](#)

FUTURE RAMBLES

The banner above will feature in all future newsletters, and one tap will take you to the latest up-to-date BHR walks programme. A number of new walks have been added recently and there are more to come as BHR lifts itself up from lockdown slumber. Current regulations do of course mean that all walks must be pre-booked by text to the number given in the walk entry, and in the event of a necessary cancellation you will receive a text informing you.

More leaders are always needed, so this is another plea for walk leaders to come forward to add to our programme. Leaders are free to set the maximum number of walkers, choosing any number between 6 and 15, and all participants must book in advance by text message. If the changing Covid-19 regulations require the walk to be cancelled it is a simple matter of texting those who have booked to inform them of the cancellation.

In these uncertain times no-one expects walk leaders to invest time and energy in planning new routes, but the resurrection of a few old favourites from the archives will help keep boots on the ground until better times arrive. If you are unable to enter details of your walk on to the Group's database you can seek help and advice at admin@beachyheadramblers.com



AGM - IMPORTANT AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA

The 37th Annual General Meeting of Beachy Head Ramblers will be held on Sunday 8th November 2020 at 11:30am via Zoom. The committee have decided this is the best approach in line with Government guidelines and guidance from the Ramblers Association and Charity Commission, enabling members to take part in a safe and secure way from their own homes. Members will already have received the AGM agenda in a separate mailing, together with the minutes of last year's AGM.

Subsequent to this mailing there have been changing circumstances which require amendments to the agenda:

Our long-serving Chairman Colin Wharton has announced his intention to stand down as Chairman and leave the Committee with effect from the AGM. It is proposed that Group Secretary Elaine Saunders be elected at the AGM as the new Chair. It is also proposed that Linda Bailey is elected to the Committee as Group Secretary. Members will have seen from the previous agenda that BHR Walks Co-ordinator Peter Slepokura is standing down, and it is now proposed that this role should go to David Fry who is standing for re-election. All other members of the present Committee, Sue Tomkins, Peter Clinch, Lucie Thorneycroft and Alan Hibbert are also standing for re-election. No other nominations have been received.

Members who attend the AGM will be able to vote on all proposals. If you have not yet registered to attend and would like to do so, please send an email to admin@beachyheadramblers.com by the deadline of 26th October, and you will be sent an email containing a link to the meeting. You then simply click on that link at the appropriate time and you will be taken to the meeting. You do not need to have a Zoom account. If you have any queries about using Zoom it's worth checking out the 'frequently asked questions' on the [Zoom help pages](#).

CHRISTMAS RAMBLES

It may seem a long way off but the festive season will be upon us soon. The Covid situation may derail all good intentions but that doesn't mean we shouldn't put some plans in place. So put December 16th in your diaries for a Christmas picnic ramble from Firle Beacon. Bring your own pies etc. for lunch at Bishopstone, and a few surprises are promised along the way.



A post-Christmas ramble on 27th December is also planned to blow away those Christmas excesses. Both walks are now bookable and details are on the [website](#) and the [Facebook page](#).

FOOTPATH MAINTENANCE

It hasn't escaped anyone's notice that the state of many of our footpaths has left a lot to be desired this year. The Covid-19 crisis is partly to blame of course, leaving Councils cash-strapped and work-parties unable to operate.

Some BHR members have expressed interest in carrying out regular footpath maintenance and David Fry is now liaising with Eastbourne Borough Council, South Downs National Park Authority and the Ramblers with a view to establishing a BHR footpaths group. Depending on circumstances it is hoped this project might start by the Spring of 2021. If this sounds like something you might be interested in, do let David know at dfry.architects@gmail.com

POLEGATE ROADWORKS



Highways England, perpetrators of those pesky road works that we all love to hate but have resigned ourselves to live with, have announced some extra treats for us. This is worth bearing in mind if your route to the start of a walk takes you anywhere near the place over the next three weekends:

Surfacing will be taking place throughout the day time of the weekend of October 24th/25th, and again the following weekend of October 31st/November 1st, causing major disruption. And just when you thought it was safe to get back in the car, they will be relocating the contraflow during the weekend of November 7th/8th, causing more gnashing of teeth. Happy motoring.

SEVEN SISTERS COUNTRY PARK



Following the agreement between East Sussex County Council and South Downs National Park Authority for the latter to take over the running of the Seven Sisters Country Park, planning applications have been submitted for alterations to the Visitor Centre and associated buildings.

There are a lot of documents to wade through but if you have the time they can be viewed [here](#) and [here](#).

HISTORY WALKS : THE THREE LIGHTHOUSES

The walk along the clifftops between Eastbourne and Seaford has rightly earned its place in every list of Britain's best walks. Along the way it offers some magnificent coastal panoramas and gives views of three lighthouses: Belle Tout, Beachy Head and Royal Sovereign :



Belle Tout was the first to be constructed when, in 1828, local MP and philanthropist John Fuller, best known as 'Mad Jack' of Fullers Follies, paid for the building of a wooden lighthouse on the cliffs. Such was its success that it was soon replaced by a more permanent structure, built from Aberdeen granite and including adjoining accommodation, which came in to operation in 1832.

Its location was planned so that the light would be obscured by the edge of the cliff if sailors were too close to the shore, but over the years erosion of the cliffs reduced its effectiveness and when cracks began to appear in the chalk Trinity House realised they needed a replacement.

Belle Tout was decommissioned in 1902 and sold. It first became a tea shop and then changed hands a number of times. Between 1923 and 1948 it was owned by London surgeon Sir James Purves-Stewart who oversaw the addition of a second storey to the accommodation. The Second World War caused the evacuation of Sir James and his family, and their home became significantly damaged by the locally-stationed Canadian troops using it as target practice.

The next occupants were the family of Dr Edward Reville Cullinan, who carried out renovations to the shattered building before moving on in 1962. A succession of owners followed, including the BBC who decided it was the ideal location for the making of 'Life and Loves of a She-Devil'. (Anyone remember it?)



More owners followed, but by the late '90s the constant coastal erosion was threatening to send the lighthouse tumbling in to the sea.

In 1999, in a remarkable feat of engineering, Belle Tout lighthouse was moved back from the cliffs by 17 metres. A new ground floor building was constructed in the slope of the hill behind the structure, and the lighthouse was then pushed by hydraulic jacks along

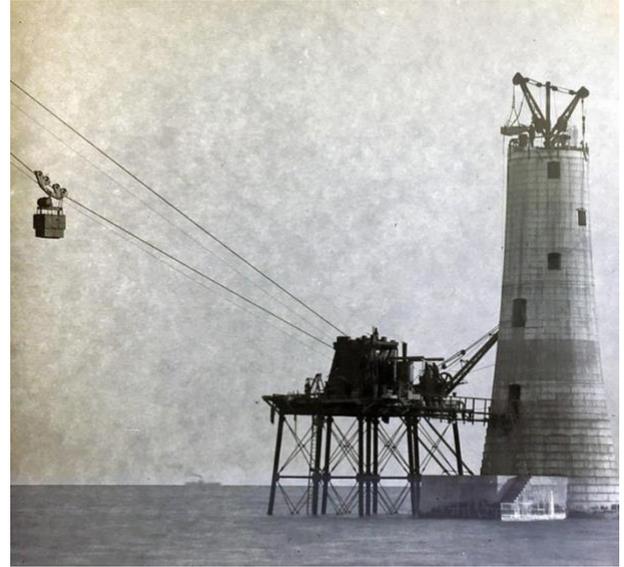
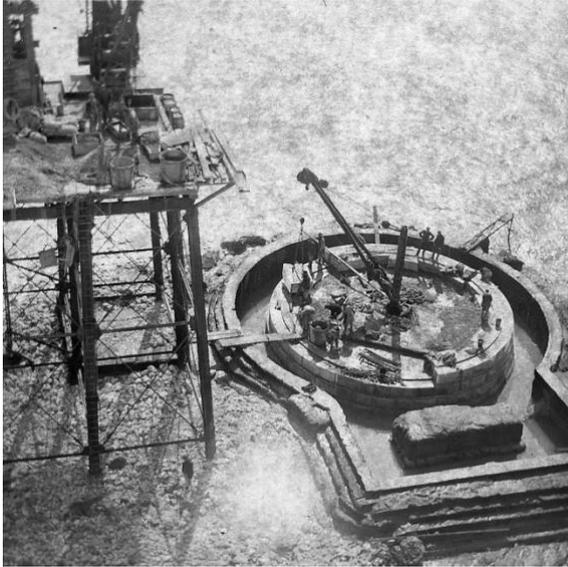
steel and concrete beams until it sat on top of its new ground floor. It is now a rare thing; a three-storey building where the original storey is the middle one!



In 2008 it was purchased by David and Barbara Shaw who, after a major investment in refurbishment and renovation, finally opened Belle Tout as a hotel in 2010.

It now offers panoramic views from the lantern room and a very high standard of accommodation. A room for the night will cost you between £160 and £240.

Beachy Head lighthouse came in to service in 1902, replacing the decommissioned Belle Tout. The decision was taken to build the new lighthouse on the shoreline rather than the clifftop, the better to reflect the light against the white chalk cliffs. Construction began in 1899 with the erection of a cable system anchored to the cliff top to transport men and materials to the building site below. Additionally, a ladder of steps was pinned to the cliff face to allow further access.



The next stage was to build a dam around the construction area to prevent the flooding of the site at high tide and allowing work to continue throughout daylight hours. Despite the obvious difficulties the lantern was first lit on 2nd October 1902, the project completed on time and under budget. Another reminder that the Victorians were better at these things than we are.

Constructed of Cornish granite and standing 43 metres tall, the lighthouse contains 8 storeys connected by a geometric staircase. At its base the walls are nearly 3 metres thick, narrowing to around $\frac{3}{4}$ metre at the top. Beachy Head was staffed by three keepers working 4-week shifts. This had become the Trinity House policy for all lighthouses following a number of incidents in which having a staff of two keepers had led to tensions, arguments and fist-fights! In 1974 the lighthouse was converted from oil-powered energy to electricity, and then in 1981 Trinity House began the process of automating all lighthouse operations. The final three keepers left Beachy Head in 1983.

Originally painted with black stripes to mark it out from the chalk cliff face, these were changed to the now familiar red and white stripes in 1951. When, in 2011, Trinity House declined to justify the cost of a much-needed repainting, the people of Eastbourne stepped in and the "Save Our Stripes" campaign eventually raised the necessary £27,000. The repainting was undertaken in 2013 and money is still being raised for a further redecoration when needed. With Trinity House recently announcing their intention to increase the strength of the Beachy Head light, its future is secure.



Visitors to Eastbourne have been known to enquire as to the nature of the “big cross” out at sea. From a distance it can resemble the rather wonky mast of a tall ship, but it is of course the Royal Sovereign lighthouse.



The sandstone shoal known as the Royal Sovereign shoal is situated between 6 and 7 miles off the Eastbourne coast and causes turbulent seas in the area.

It has been marked to protect shipping since 1875, initially by a lightship. This was replaced in 1971 when the present tower was constructed.



Building took place on the Eastside beach at Newhaven, where the new tower was constructed of concrete in two sections. The base and vertical pillar section were floated into position where the hollow base was flooded and allowed to sink on to a levelled area of the sea bed. The cabin section was then floated out, positioned over the base and allowed to settle on to the column as the tide fell.

The pillar had an inner telescopic section which, when attached to the cabin, was jacked up to its full height and locked into position. The underside of the cabin is well above the maximum wave height and the navigation light is 28 metres above sea level.

The cabin section contained accommodation for the three keepers who manned the lighthouse until its automation in 1994. The flat roof of the cabin section provides a helicopter landing platform, and the lighthouse tower itself is located at one corner of the roof with direct access to the cabin below.

Regrettably the Royal Sovereign's days are numbered. It is nearing the end of its natural life and Trinity House have taken the decision to dismantle it before it becomes a danger to the very shipping it was designed to protect. Covid-19 has given the tower a brief reprieve, but we will soon no longer be able to enlighten tourists on the nature of the “big cross” out at sea.



Caption competition? (keep it clean!)




ramblers
at the heart of walking