Sevenoaks Ramblers

Brenchley to Matfield Circular Walk (Mudfest) - 11 miles

Wednesday, 28th January 2026

Organising a walk in the Garden of England, in January, after one of the wettest winters on record, was always going to be a lottery when assessing the quality of the walking surface. This was horribly exposed on a reconnoitre the preceding weekend, when a whole wood was knee deep in water and two muddy banks felt like a particularly cruel cross country run. However, after a quick reroute and a gloriously sunny, mild day, 16 ramblers (4 from external groups) heroically (masochistically) turned up to put the course to the test! The walk began in the beautiful village of Brenchley and traversed multiple orchards and hop fields to the delightfully serene Furnace Pond.
In the 1600s this was the centre of the ‘first Industrial Revolution’ when the dammed lake provided the power for a large waterwheel that was the centre of the major iron foundry in the area. Cannons were produced for both sides in the English Civil War. Two hundred people were employed to fell timber for the charcoal used in the process.
The other side of the valley led us past numerous country houses including Shirrenden, Sprivers and Marle Place. There was a brief respite along country roads, but any clean boots, gaiters and trousers had long since been splattered by the abundantly moist Wealden Clay.
A recovery lunch was held on Matfield Green, before an afternoon trek back to Brenchley. There were even scientific attempts to measure the depth of the mud (see photo) but I am pleased to announce that none of the walkers were consumed into the bowels of the earth. Most seemed to retain their enthusiasm and sense of humour at the end of the day! They had volunteered after all






