

Social Evening Oct 17, 1953.

A party of ~~20~~<sup>19</sup> assembled on Saturday evening Oct 17 at 6.30 pm at the corner of Valley Rd & Bridge Rd, leader Mr. Gordon.

Our route lay across the well known footpaths across the golf links to Lansford & thence by Broomfield Park to the Chaguan Pass. En route, we collected 4 more members & 4 more awaited us at the Chaguan being travelled by car.

Preliminary refreshments were enjoyed & during these our last member arrived, making a total of 28.

A very enjoyable meal was then served of roast pork with all the accessories, followed by apple pie & custard. The helpings were very generous & many members were reduced to a state of somnolence by the end of the meal.

A programme of community singing, with Lady Penke & Mr. de Pough at the piano, soon dispelled any lingering effects of over-eating & all joined in with gusto & if not with complete musical effect.

Solo items were contributed by Mr

Garnod + M. Peckham + the secretary  
 contributed two paper + pencil games.

The evening came to an end, somewhat  
 unexpectedly but not much before its  
 proper time by an invasion of the regular  
 habitués of the inn. They seemed to  
 think that we had had sole rights to the  
 rooms for long enough + now thought it  
 was their turn!

We felt that it was scarcely a  
 matter upon which to argue, so we  
 withdrew in good order +, we hope,  
 with dignity.

We retraced our path through  
 Prospect Park to Sempron + W.G.C +  
 the evening was voted a great success  
 by all concerned.

W.S.

Sunday, 1st November 1953.

Autumn Colours in the West Chilterns. Leader Ralph Thorburn

The day was certainly misnamed when the calendar was worked out! Notwithstanding the weather forecast which Air Ministry gave our Secretary, 19 people turned up at the Car Park, 19 people having booked seats beforehand; 19 people climbed into the coach to discuss (out of the wet) the advisability of going on, and 19 people went.

The coach took us via New Hatfield, St Albans bypass, Watford, Rickmansworth, Chorley Wood, Amersham and High Wycombe, finally disembarking us in the National Trust village of West Wycombe. With macs well buttoned up we set off through the archway of the 15th Century Clock House up the hill to ~~the~~ skirt the ~~manse~~ manse and golden-bell-turreted church at the top, where we plunged into nearly 2 miles of woods - with occasional clearings.

One member took the first opportunity to sit her down in one of the numerous ponds we encountered; another <sup>and they!</sup> ricked his foot soon after; but we carried on undaunted.

Emerging from the woods we went forward over Slough Hill, with a view of the Rickors' gap opening up forward, Lodge Hill standing sentinel straight ahead.

At the end of ~~Slough~~ <sup>Slough</sup> Hill we turned left along the lane but at the corner in the bottom it was decided not to take the footpath up the slope to Bleasow Ridge owing to the stickiness of the mud, and we reached the Ridge by the lane to The Luty.

turning right to The Boar (4 1/2 miles from start).

Looking like the proverbial drowned rats, dripping from hats & noses & finger tips, squelching water with every step, yet we were welcomed in by the landlord, some squeezing into the public bar which had a cheerful fire, some into the Private bar where an electric heater was switched on for us. And so we ununched our sandwiches and drank our drinks.

Lunch ended, we debated the future, the upshot being that we split into 2 parties - 7 to take the long walk (even that being condensed from the leader's original idea to about 5 1/2 miles instead of 8). The remainder to take a short walk led by Mr Pyles down through Radnage, over by Andridge Farm down across Hallbottom and past Mallards Court into Stokenchurch to await the others for tea. A propitious bus into Wycombe, however, tempted half this party into its shelter, and these were fortunate enough to catch another into Stokenchurch with only 20 minutes to wait in West Wycombe. So we became 3 crowds.

The longer walkers (bravely including the ricked foot) took to the path which leads steeply down to Radnage Church in front of the lovely hanging woods south of Bledlow Ridge, right along the lane back up to Rants Green and for a way along the ridge road towards Chimney Hill. At the Pleasant we went left through Sundry Wood\* which brought us to Sprigg's Alley (or Holly) and the last stage of the day's walk which was that entrancingly fine path through Crawell Woods\* - hardly long enough! - and up

\* Both Sundry Wood and Crawell Wood are little tongues of Oxfordshire; the rest of the walk was in Buckinghamshire.

the last slope to Malvern's lewest. There had been a faint sign of a break in the rain, and as we breasted that last slope the sky quite suddenly came over blue and the sun setting low shone across the valley onto the trees of Crowell Wood behind us. The brilliant red-brown of some of the trees, against the earthy brown of bare branches, topped by the steel-grey sky of the receding rain clouds probably made all the previous discomfort of the day worth while. And then one thought back, in happier frame of mind, and suddenly realised that the grey skies, and rain-hazed views had magnified the width of the valleys and the size of the hills and given an appearance of grandeur, almost, of majesty, that these charming hills would not have had on any other, fine day.

And so, finally, to join the others - changing into dry socks in our waiting coach, tea in the King's Arms (and the hot suppers were welcome) and the ride home which in the evening was along the Oxford-London road through Beaconsfield, Gerrards Cross and Denham to reach Rickmansworth and the way we had come in the morning.

The second essay on that area, again all wet. If we go again it would make a pleasant change to be there in fine weather.

R.T.B.

WALK 53

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Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November 1953

Path between Welwyn & Ayot

A party of 15 set off at 2.30 pm under a rather doubtful-looking sky. Lead by NW & NW's Chinn, the party took the familiar path through the woods via Mounts Walk to Digswell House, across Digswell Park Road, by footpath to Welwyn.

Leaving Welwyn Hill E, "The Steamer" we climbed alongside St Mary's School to Whitwell, which was left by a path through Gregg's Wood. (This path is on the Ordnance Map but has not yet been claimed on the Deposits Map). Emerging by St Peter's Church (Ayot) we turned right along the road for a few yards, then left by another path skirting Saul's Wood. This path is very overgrown: it continues to the Luton Branch Railway, crosses it by wooden stiles in fair condition & turns right along the railway for  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile. An obstruction in the shape of a wire fence caused some trouble. &

Recrossing the railway by another pair of wooden stiles in somewhat poor condition, we entered a field forming part of the grounds of Ayot Place. The field contains pig-sties. The path over it

is not visible. An iron gate on the northern edge of the field gives access to a rather rough drive, & the path turns right along this, giving presently a good view of Ryed Place. In a short distance it joins the main drive to the house. We turn right again & soon pass out of the grounds by a lodge on to the West-Heathampton road.

A few yards along this road, we passed through a gate opposite the remains of old St Peter's Church & to the right of a pair of cottages. A broad track now leads to Ryefield Farm.

Up to this point our way had been generally west & north and as the sky had cleared a good deal during the afternoon, we were rewarded by the sight of the autumn sun lighting up the colours still remaining on many of the fine trees along the way. In this undulating country, too, splendid open views attract the eye at every turn.

A little short of Ryefield Farm, a path should turn towards the east & run across country to Limes Farm but the first half of this path is not visible on the ground & there is also time to negotiate.

From Limes Farm, the party was now in Malvern where tea had been ordered at Rose Cottage

Cafe' & was awaiting us in a warm cheerful room.  
 During the early part of the afternoon, the party was shadowed by a small boy who cordially saw himself as a 'Red Indian Tracker'. Like he joined on and facilitated the walk like a seasoned hand. One of the members presented him with his tea, to which he did full justice.

After tea, the party went home by bus. A very enjoyable walk, combining business with pleasure in that some of the paths followed were being examined as a check on their condition & where action is needed to establish them.

C.G.C.



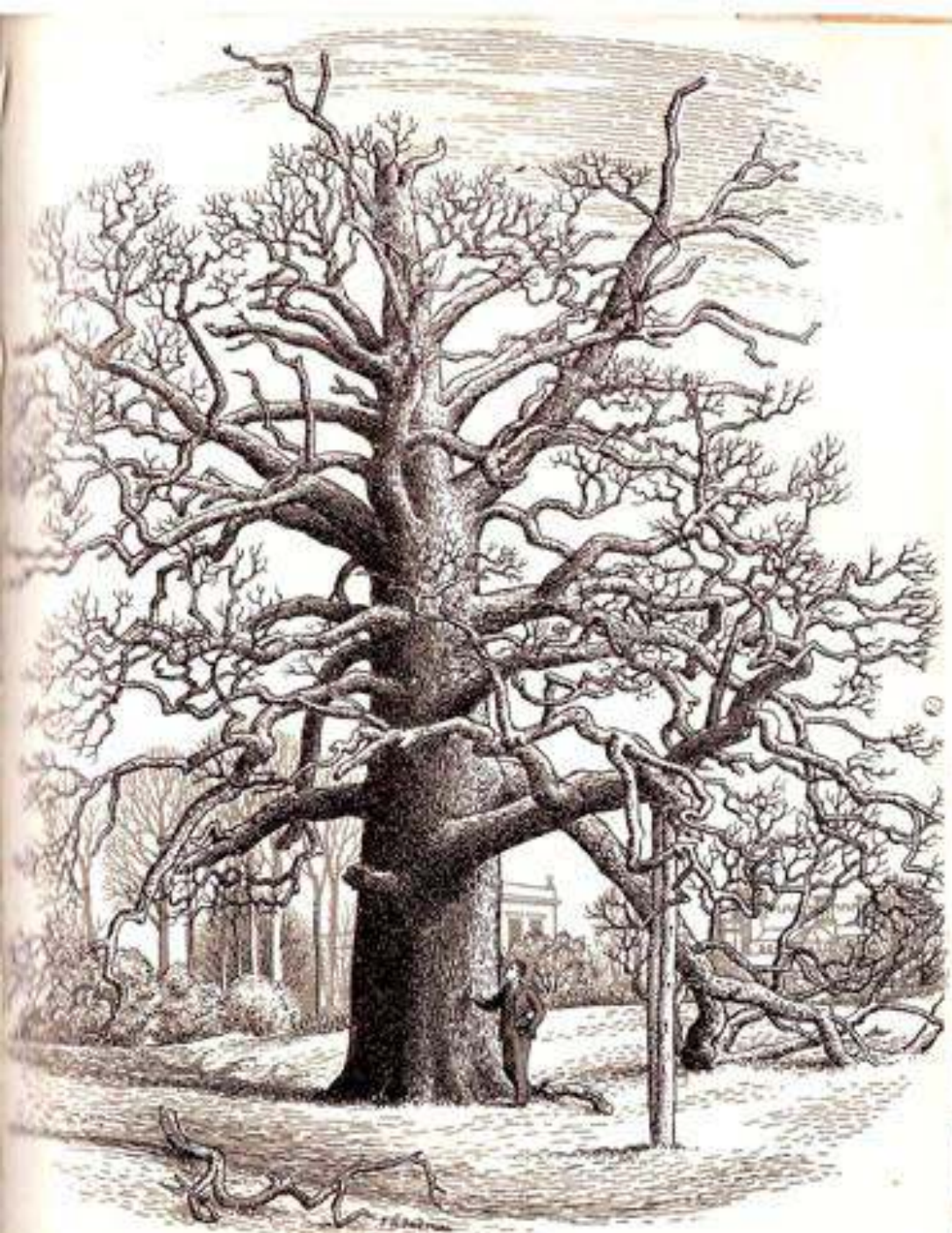
Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November Panchangar.

Morning ramble led by Mr. Byles.

The first part of the route was the same as that taken on Aug. 9<sup>th</sup> with a lift on the bus as far as Bridge Road Cafe. The chimps joined us at Attermore Hall to make a party of 14. Following the straight farm track, as before, we found a gap through the overgrown end of Money Hole Lane on to the airfield, but could see no sign of the bridle road which used to continue eastward by the S. end of Birchall Wood.

As on the previous walk we followed the path on the airfield to Birchall Wood which we entered, & shortly turned left along a pleasant path which brought us out on to the road leading down to Poplars Green & the entrance to Panchangar Park. Here even on Sunday we found men working on an enormous concrete drain which is being laid all the way from Hereford.

We wanted to visit Panchangar to see the famous Oak & to have a look at the mansion before it was pulled down, but Mr Walter Wallace of Stenage who had



*The Panshanger Oak, Hertfordshire*

brought the estate refused us permission to go through the grounds. The oak however was on the land sold with the house to R. Astley & Co, demolition contractors, who on request kindly sent us a letter authorising our visit.

So we walked boldly into the Park & up towards the house, pausing to view the great oak, a very fine tree although its top has been killed by lightning. We measured the circumference of the bole at 23 ft. at breast height.

The weather was mild, even sunny, when the early mist had dispersed, & very pleasant for wandering round the garden, & admiring the view across the lake, while the house itself had much to interest us & recall the pomp & circumstance of a vanished age.

Soon we had to tear ourselves away, & followed the drive down to Hastingfordbury, where after refreshment at the White Horse we caught the 1-10 bus back to the Garden City.

E. J. B.

## OLDEST OAK TREE IN ENGLAND?

THOUGHT by many to be the oldest oak tree in England Panshanger Oak has now been included in a Tree Preservation Order made recently by Hertfordshire County Council.

Hertford Rural Council's Town Planning Committee recently recommended that the tree should be the subject of a Preservation Order.

The oak stands to the west of Panshanger House.

It is one of, if not the biggest, in the south of England. Mr. G. Turner, of Bramfield, told the Mercury.

Mr. Turner is a member of Hertford Rural Council and of its Town Planning Committee, and a former agent to the Panshanger Estate.

He points out that the tree stands in what were formerly the pleasure gardens of Panshanger House.

Both Mr. Turner and the present agent to the estate, Mr. Richard Wheatley, of Cole Green, are unaware of any record which might point to the actual age of the tree. Mr. Wheatley says that 200 years ago it was known as "The Great Oak."

He knows of no source to dispute that the tree is the oldest oak in the country.

Overseas tourists visiting that part of Hertfordshire have often photographed the tree as a souvenir of their visit.

Panshanger Oak is about 66 feet tall, and its longest limb is 44 feet.

Another unusual tree which is now also included in the Preservation Order is a large ginkgo tree (a species of Japanese fern) which stands in the kitchen garden at Panshanger.

Mr. Wheatley believes that this specimen is the second largest of its kind in England.

(Herts Mercury)  
15th Sept 1963

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WALK 57

Ramble - Saturday Dec 12, 1953

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A party of eight caught the 2.40 pm bus to Agot Green where we met the Leader, Sir Francis Peake & one other member. The weather was dull but quite mild & rain seemed unlikely. There was a short wait while the leader phoned the tea place to give our exact numbers & then we set off along the path on the left of the Red Lion Inn, bearing to the left at the far end of the first field, over a lane & an opposite stile, over two fields to join the lane again at Manor Farm. Here we turned left along the lane, past Soray's Farm then took the path on the right, through a gate, about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile beyond the farm. This was followed under the railway & then along the edge of Warren Wood & Dandell's Wood. The Coddle - Wheathampstead road was crossed & the path continued on the opposite side along the edge of the wood known as Stocking Spings. The path now became a sunken track running through small copses.

Conversation at this point recalled

that on this ramble last year, snow was just beginning to fall at this point & developed into a fierce blizzard.

The track brought us out on the road just outside of St. Lawrence. Going forward a few yards, a somewhat difficult stile on the left was scaled & we turned right along the edge of the field, climbed another stile obstructed by a fallen tree (still there from last year) & continued straight forward to a further stile at the side of the drive leading to Lamer House. From here, we continued straight ahead along the edge of Lamer Park, until we came to a fence along the edge of wood. Here there was a hand-gate fastened up, but on the right there was a stile, which we climbed & turned left along the edge of the wood. At the end of the wood, we turned half left to bring <sup>us</sup> along the edge of some glass-houses belonging to Bleak House, & then out on to the road. Just a few yards off to the right was the Cross Keys Inn, where we were hospitably welcomed. Our hostess asked us to remove our muddy shoes, as she had kindly laid out

tea in the newly furnished lounge. After complying with this request, we adjourned to the lounge & were charmed with the old-world atmosphere of the decorations & furnishings.

We enjoyed our tea greatly under such hospitable surroundings. After tea, just prior to my departure, the party was surprised (and amused) to see one of the members taking an intense interest in an advertisement carrying a particularly fine picture of the "female form device". After offers to purchase the advertisement on behalf of this member had been rejected, we left the inn & walked down the main road, now in darkness, for about 1 1/4 miles, arriving in Wheatthampton with time to spare for the 6:19 pm train to Wexham Garden City. The short journey ~~was~~ passed very quickly & almost hilariously & we reached home shortly before 7:0 pm well pleased with yet another expedition.

