

One of the nicest aspects of training for an expedition to climb an active volcano with six injured soldiers has been reacquainting myself with some local walks and exercise classes. Having not been for a very long time, I went back to Zumba in West Malling last week and was surprised with how easily I slotted back in to some of the routines. Or putting it another way I hadn't lost my ability to look like a puppet on a string dancing completely out of time with the music and everyone else in the class! That said it was great fun and good exercise.

In addition I found some brilliant local walks on the internet including a 5 mile walk known as the Aylesford loop. Starting in the village it took me up through the back of Eccles to the border of Burham and then up the hill to the viewing site on Bluebell Hill. It was wonderful to sit for a few moments to catch my breath back and look over the villages and beyond the River Medway. Even the steam from Aylesford Newsprint and other factories nearby add a certain beauty to the vista from one side of the Downs to the other.

From the top of Bluebell Hill I wandered back down along the North Downs Way taking in the ancient sites of Kits Coty and Little Kits Coty along the way before a brief spell along the prehistoric Pilgrims' Way. Dropping back into the back of Aylesford I stumbled across some flytipping, which looked at first sight like asbestos. Thanks to being accompanied by modern technology while trekking along ancient paths, I was able to report it straight away!

So with the evenings getting lighter, the challenge fast approaching and Easter recess now here I intend to get out and do some more local walks and make the most of this wonderful area I live in.