



THE STILE BOOK



50 YEARS OF



THE MONDAY GROUP



1961 – 2011



Compiled and illustrated by Tom Walker MG





The Stile Book



The Stile Book was compiled and produced by Tom Walker in 2011, marking the 50th anniversary of the Monday Group. Tom, a Monday Group volunteer, compiled and edited it from interviews with those involved in the group since its inception in 1962. Chief amongst these was Harold Rowling, the redoubtable founder of the Group, who, aged 89, was still the heart and soul of the Group, actively engaged in stile design, fund raising, leading a team of volunteers, planning the work and turn-ing out rain, snow or shine. Harold worked indefatigably to identify and fearlessly deal with rights of way issues.



Towards the end of 2018, Harold (then aged 96) announced that he intended to withdraw from his role over the next year or so. This announcement posed a huge challenge to the wider organisation given its dependence on Harold for a period of 57 years.



A steering group was established and proposals were then put to a special general meeting, to agree a constitution and set up a management committee with the aim of ensuring that the Monday Group would continue.



The Stile Book is a distinctive record of a unique organisation. It captures the Monday Group's spirit and paints a vivid picture of the characters who made it what it is. The new organisation is determined to capture and retain this spirit, and to provide a firm foundation for it to continue doing the vital work that Harold initiated, of improving access to the countryside for walkers, and ensuring that ancient rights of way are secured for future generations.



While the Monday Group now differs in detail in its operation from Harold's era, by and large, the approach set out in the Stile Book still prevails. Therefore, there has been no attempt to update the book to reflect current practice, as to do so would invalidate the book as a historic record.

We can only hope that the next 57 years are as successful as the last.

April 2020



THE MONDAY GROUP 1961 - 2011

21 years of Sundays, 29 years of Mondays

BRAMBLES, BLACKTHORN, BARBED-WIRE AND BOMBS

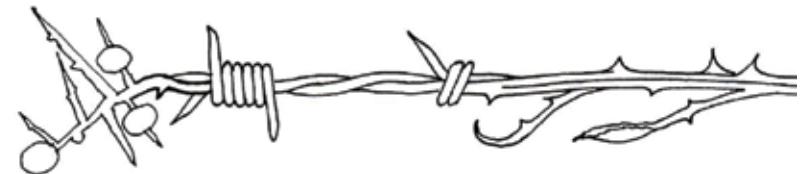


It could be said that the first seeds of the Monday Group were sewn during the Second World War, 'seeds of destruction' that came from British munitions factories and were planted, in their thousands, by force and by British forces in British soil!

Before Chamberlain declared war on Germany, the South Downs were all grassland with sheep grazing as they had been for centuries and there were few fences and gates.

In 1940, to maximise food production in war time, the Downs started to be ploughed for the first time but the path along the top, now known as the South Downs Way, was left undisturbed.

In late 1940 and early 1941, when a German invasion was feared likely, the whole area from Dover along the South Downs, from the coastline to a line just north of the Downs was declared a Restricted Area under the Defence of the Realm Act (D.O.R.A.) and only farmers and those who lived inside the area were permitted to enter.



By 1941 the Sussex Downland area was sealed off with barbed wire and used for military training and as a gunnery range. The Army inland on Ditchling Common and the Navy in the Channel firing over Brighton, were aiming at the same targets, the Downland farm buildings, all of which were soon destroyed. During the course of these operations the Downs became riddled with thousands of unexploded shells.



Ruins of High Park Farmhouse, Ditchling



High Park Farm Cottages 3 & 4
Photos 1945



Harold Rowling MBE in 2011 with one of the seeds of destruction that led to his founding the Monday Group in 1961

A MAN, A WOMAN AND A BICYCLE

Two days before Britain's declaration of war on Germany, the school at which the 17-year-old Harold Rowling was then a pupil, transferred from London to Lewes.

He takes up the story:

"One of the few good things attributable to Herr Hitler is that he was responsible for bringing me to live most of my life in Westmeston. I explored the new-to-me Sussex countryside and soon came across the village which, with its church and farm nestling so close to the Downs, particularly appealed to me."



The 'hamlet' of Westmeston with St. Martins Church peeping through the trees on the right. (the house in the centre was built in c.1970)

After a year in Lewes - I was in the Upper Sixth - I returned to London to attend University. However, I had acquired a girlfriend, Pam, in Lewes and I, therefore, found it necessary to return there frequently. Walking was then, as now, an interest of mine and I became familiar with the Downs and the path along the top from Lewes to Westmeston and beyond. However, the imposition of the Restricted Area immediately threatened my visits to see Pam. Police were on duty at all the railway stations and although I occasionally managed to avoid them in the black-out, at other times I had to return to London by the next train. Thus I came increasingly to make my visits by bicycle. There were, of course, police-manned roadblocks on all the main roads into the Restricted Area





This map gives a 'bird's eye' perspective view notionally from above Ditchling Common looking directly south taking in the South Downs from Mount Harry in the east to Clayton Hill in the west.

Map designed by Roald Knutsen

Footpaths

Bridleways

Reproduced by permission of the Footpaths Conservation Society



but on the rural lanes barriers were not normally watched. I used Spatham Lane, Streat Lane and Novington Lane to avoid the barriers but there was often one at Offham which caused me to go north for a while and then double back via Barcombe and Hamsey to Lewes. On several occasions I rode down from London and found all roads into Lewes barred, so I had to cycle back again. I am always reminded of this every year when the London to Brighton bicycle run comes through Westmeston and I marvel at my youthful ability to pedal there and back in one day.



Jill

"Once a year, after the corn had been harvested from the huge Downland acreage now down to crops, which also erased many more footpaths, the Army allowed a walk to take place from Lewes to Clayton windmills. It was led by a Sergeant and we had strict instructions to follow him in single file because of all the unexploded shells which he said were everywhere. Only about 12 or 15 intrepid walkers turned out for this.

"As we passed above Westmeston I would trail to the rear of the column and then, unobserved, slip away down to Underhill Lane using Jenners, a thatched house with white-washed walls as my objective because it stood out.

"I was convinced that the Sergeant exaggerated the danger from unexploded ordnance because although I always looked carefully where I trod, I never saw a shell. It was only much later that I realised that, of course,



Jack

the shells were well embedded in the soil and so not visible. A bigger hazard was getting through the Army's barbed wire before I could reach Underhill Lane. I headed for Westmeston because I knew the number 24 bus (every 2 hours) would take me back to Lewes. Westmeston thus became a significant place for me in the early war years and I have clear recollections of the church corner as I cycled to and from London.



After my war service in the R.A.F. I returned to this area, living initially in Lewes and Hassocks, before finally settling in Underhill Lane in 1953 when a plot of land became available on which to build a house to my own design. Ah, yes, and another thing too, because Pam, who brought me back through Westmeston so many times, in the end married me."



Still from a 1960 Pathé film about wartime bombs found on the South Downs between Newhaven and Falmer, being detected, dug up, defused, detonated and cleared.

For some 15 years after the war, unexploded shells in great numbers continued to litter, but gradually be cleared from, the Downs. However, all the access routes onto the Downs remained closed, not because of the hazard of the bombs but because farmers, who have never had any interest in people wandering across their land, preferred it that way. Besides, there was no strong footpath law in those days, as there is now, the Highways Act not coming in until 1980. Thus, virtually all footpaths and bridleways onto the Downs remained blocked by blackthorn, bramble-choked barbed wire and so overgrown as to be impenetrable.



Then, one day in 1961 Pam Rowling said to her husband: "We should be able to take the dogs walking on the Downs, Harold, but all the ways up are closed off. We can't go on like this. You've got to do something about it." Harold's response to this challenge continues to this day. It began by getting the Westmeston Bostal re-opened. This is the local bridleway, climbing from the village to Ditchling Beacon, at that time padlocked off as well as blocked by barbed wire and overgrowth. To achieve this, the Rowlings had to put pressure on the District Council, who were responsible for paths, and take the landowner, Mrs. Rhodes-Moorhouse, a near neighbour, to the magistrates court despite their fears that this might make them unpopular with her. But although she was ordered to open the Bostal, both parties remained on friendly terms until her death in 2003.



View of Westmeston (top R) from the top of the Bostal

Bostals are trackways with a gentle slope enabling oxen and horses to draw heavy loads up the steeper slopes of the Sussex Downs:

Germanic root:
'beorg' = hill
'stig' = path
However, this is thought to have developed from the earlier O.E.
'borg steall'
meaning, a place of refuge.



The Bostal beneath the tree line

VIII

MAKING WAY BUT NOT JUST WHILE THE SUN SHINES

The essential work of the clearance groups

B&W - Sussex Downsmen at work near Blackstone Village, Woodmancote, W.Sussex in the early 1960's
On R Alan Cobb behind Reg Adsett William (Bill) Hook? Brighton GP Ben Perkins in foreground



After 1945 the British Government bought land and allocated it to ex-servicemen to cultivate but they began to encroach on the Downs raising concerns about ownership and public access. The Society of Sussex Downsmen (est. 1923) and a number of other, newly formed field and footpath organisations, aided by new, large-scale Ordnance Survey maps which revealed all rights-of-way, began to rediscover and re-open them. The Monday Group among them was, and still is, the only voluntary body to make stiles, bridges etc. as well as doing clearance. At that time neither East nor West Sussex County Councils had responsibility for these services. The Monday Group's two clearance teams go out every Monday identifying and re-opening 'submerged' footpaths and maintaining those already in use, a never ending task since, like time and tide, brambles, nettles, blackthorn, and their ilk, wait for no man or woman. The stile and structure teams also do a bit of sickle or secateur work but report the more substantial clearance projects to the experts.

Below - East Sussex, early 1960's
L-R Ken Blake (the Bad Axeman), Reg Adsett and Ben Perkins burning the results of their clearance work unaware of the close proximity of a newly laid gas main.



Far L and L
Stills of clearance work from ITV Meridian News feature 1996.

Below
Before, during and after clearing 'permissive' pathway behind Plumpton Railway Station, in the rain.



IX



A MAN AND SIX WOMEN

The very considerable undertaking of now opening up all the other pathways in their area brought into being the Ditchling, Westmeston and Streat Footpaths Society, set up by Harold and chaired by him to this day. This was not intended to be, and is not, primarily a walking group although its activities, which showed people where the paths were, naturally engendered a walks programme. Essentially its objectives were to clear and preserve the footpath network around Ditchling and Hassocks, especially those leading to the Downs and not just for leisure. In those days people used their legs to get around with much more than now and the footpaths played a vital part in their everyday journeys to work, for shopping, and for children to get to and from school.

The original membership of the Committee of the Footpaths Society comprised Harold as Chairman and 6 local ladies, 4 married and 2 single, who spent every other Sunday leading the walks to show where the paths ran across the fields. However, in the beginning, the more strenuous tasks that the ladies could not do, such as repairing or replacing stiles, were done by Harold on his own, the main reason for which is ironically explained in his own words in the following anecdote:

X



"At our first meeting of the Committee I asked the ladies what should be my first project because I realised that they would not be able to do the sort of work that was going to be required on the broken down stiles and bridges all around the countryside.

"They said that what they most wanted was a concrete path through North End Farm yard where the footpath ran and was shared with the cows going in and out for milking twice a day. In the winter time, of course, the path was simply a morass of mud and cow droppings. That was in October 1961 but I decided to wait until the following year for the better weather before undertaking the necessary preparations.



"Accordingly, at a suitable time in 1962, I constructed the formwork and arranged with the concrete company to deliver 3½ cubic yards of ready-mixed concrete at 9.30am on a Saturday. I said to the ladies that I couldn't do this on my own. It was a long path and it would take several men to do the job. They told me not to worry and promised to send their husbands along to work with me.

"The Saturday morning came, a hot day with a clear sky, ideal for working if you could put up with the heat of the bright sunshine and there I was at 9.30. Along came the concrete truck and dumped its large load at the beginning of the path and within 10 minutes or so, drove away leaving me with the big pile of wet concrete, and no men. No husbands turned up, not one, so I had to lay the concrete by myself. On such a hot day the concrete had to be

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used quickly and long before I had finished the path, without any help since I didn't have time to recruit anybody else, the concrete had reached its initial set and I had to keep watering it to make it more usable. I pressed on until finally, by lunchtime, I had laid the whole path. I was whacked.

"That concrete path which started my career in the Monday Group demonstrates the law of unexpected consequences. It had only been open for walkers for a few weeks before the cows, after being milked in the yard, discovered it and decided they would rather walk back to the fields on a nice, firm path than through the mud and slosh that they'd previously endured and that the ladies had complained about. So in no time at all, the path was covered in cow droppings, giving the ladies the choice of either walking through the mud or the excrement. A really interesting outcome, I thought.



"Meanwhile, I could at least invest in some useful tools and, to encourage the ladies to do clearing as they led the Sunday walks, I gave each of them a pair of Wilkinson steel loppers with which to tackle the more substantial stems and branches along their way. But they never used them. Nothing got lopped and the loppers themselves were never seen again. This taught me another lesson.



"I realised then, if I hadn't realised it before, that the considerable work programme that had to be tackled by the Footpaths Society could only be carried out with the assistance of more, regular male members."



TWO MEN, TWO MEN AND A BOY, THREE MEN, AND MORE (AND AT LEAST ONE DOG)

Obviously there was a huge amount of work needing to be done and part of the problem, as well as finding more people to do it, was working out a list of priorities. From 1962, Harold worked with John Hemmings of Brighton Pathfinders who was very knowledgeable about the footpath network, pre-war. Then with a Mr. Smith (who eventually moved to Wales) and for a couple of years, the 13-year-old, Andrew Hall (probably the youngest ever volunteer) who grew up, pursued a career and returned to the Monday Group many years later in retirement. From time to time Harold was also able to lure a couple of his work colleagues down from London to help with the clearance work by wielding a mattock or billhook in the fresh air, affording them a pleasant, if active, Sunday in beautiful





surroundings.

First came the clearance, then signs and finger-posts indicating the newly opened paths.

Then, sometime in the 1970s, Reg Adsett moved into the district, and not only became the village postman but also a pillar of the Monday Group.

It was not until 1982, when Harold retired from full time employment himself and Mondays, when Reg had less postal work to do, replaced Sundays, that the Monday Group proper came into being, although for some, Monday alone would never be enough.



Harold and Reg were then joined by Peter Greenaway. They decided to set up a separate Working Group alongside the Footpaths Society in order to tackle the replacement of broken down stiles and bridges in earnest and because they were all relatively young and very energetic, the Monday Group managed to get an enormous amount of work done, often installing two stiles in one day but this kind of productivity led to

problems with the supply of timber - which was always unseasoned green oak - partly because of availability and partly the cost.

Originally, the work had begun without funding and they raised money at coffee mornings and raffles and received small donations from local individuals.



BEFORES AND AFTERS - RENOVATIONS AND REPLACEMENTS



Stepping up the pace for the less agile



Lost and found



John Gill (L) and Giles Dickins of Monday Group East replace an elderly stile with a new Mk.18



MG squeeze stile with farmer's added bodged slats



Modified by MG with lifting bar



Two old stumps are replaced with a new Mk.18



Water under troubled bridges, stopping the rot



Ditchling Parish Council then began to supply them with Japanese oak.

Reg Adsett was a tower of strength at this time and slowly, with his many contacts through his postal round, was able to raise modest sums of money donated by local organisations and those who were keen on the footpaths. With money also coming in from local parish councils and contributions from landowners towards new stiles (about £30 each time) the Group was able to purchase more materials and tools and expand its membership.

Reg, who was also a member of the South Downs Rights of Way Group, obtained a substantial annual grant, awarded by East Sussex County Council, and apportioned part of it to the Monday Group which Harold used to purchase tools and timber. This provided a very significant boost to the Monday Group's work.

When Reg eventually moved to Chelmsford, Harold and his growing team had much to thank him for.

Much of the preparation of structures was then done at Harold's small-holding in Westmeston, where he kept a tractor and trailer for work purposes and a pony and trap for pleasure.

Between 1984 and 1989 the Monday Group installed 250 stiles, 5 major footbridges, over 50 sleeper bridges, 2 sleeper causeways and a flight of 25 steps. In 1988 the Group was awarded first prize in Lewes District Council's 'Improve Your Area' competition.



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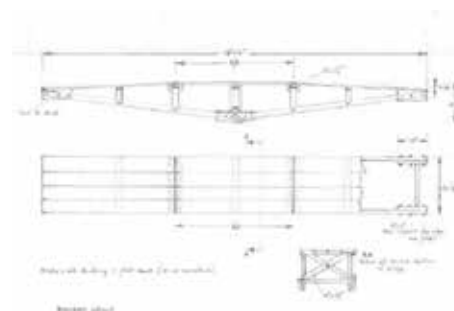
SLEEPERS ON THE JOB & WALKING THE PLANKS



A dangerously narrow bridge is replaced by one with broader appeal. Note the far sleeper bridge > and those below. The Monday Group also installs sleepers at appropriate sites although they are very heavy to manoeuvre.



A temporarily inverted bridge being prepared on site.



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With greater interest in and appreciation of its activities the Monday Group was increasingly sought out by people wishing to volunteer their services. More women joined, wanting to do clearance work following the great storm of 1987 which caused fallen trees to block many public footpaths and bridleways. Consequently a separate and complementary clearance group was started.



In 1987 one big fallen oak in Adastra Park, when tackled by the Monday Group's chain saws, provided 70 stile stumps and the ever resourceful John Bridgland fashioned a truly rustic stile from the branches of another. The counterpart of destruction is creation.

Throughout its 50 year existence, the Monday Group has never actively recruited its members. They have joined because they have heard about its activities in one way or another and been attracted to join of their own volition. It remains an entirely voluntary Group.

INFORMED INFORMALITY

Whilst the structures formed by the Monday Group are always of the highest quality, the Group itself has never had a formal structure - it isn't, strictly speaking, an organisation. It has no committee, no A.G.M, no chairman, no treasurer, no secretary and no elected leaders although, inevitably each team does have a



leader in practice who has emerged in the natural course of its evolution. Administration work is kept to a minimum and spending is authorised without having to get general approval wherever possible as long as expenses can be traced and verified. Thus, fuss is minimised and the focus is on people coming together to do good things. Indeed, one of the Monday Group's great strengths is that everyone involved is committed to the work and empowered to get on with it.

The sight, at the end of a working session, of a path cleared and freely usable by the walking public, or a newly installed stile or a bridge put over a stream or ditch, or a causeway built over a treacherously uneven or muddy section of a path, brings great satisfaction to the Monday Group workers as they wend their way home.

Even more satisfying is the appreciation of the walking public as the Monday Group improves or removes the obstacles to its pleasurable progress through the countryside. To this may be added the approval of landowners and particularly farmers' preference for the quality and effectiveness of the stiles and other structures built by the Monday Group on their land, the products of 50 years of outstanding practice.

Work that needs to be done is added to a list when reported by a member of the public - there is a contact telephone number on most of the structures the Monday Group has installed - or by members of the Group themselves, most of whom are active walkers and frequent users of local footpaths. The work is roughly prioritised



LOGISTICAL SOLILOQUY

*From A to B or not to B, that is the question
Whether 'tis nobler with the load to suffer
With slings or barrows or - outrageous notion
To take a car and drive away your troubles
And by motoring end them. To buy - to keep
No more than a mere trailer and so end
The back-ache and the thousand little knocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a good solution.*

From: One Hamlet to the Next by William (Bill) Hook



↑ Inspection



←↑
Construction

Installation
↓→



*Deeper still
and deeper
shall our
stiles be set...*
(Land of Oaken Glory)

Harold legless again

Nobody



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XXI



according to its urgency. A Group member will survey the site, decide on what action to take and carry out the work at the soonest opportunity. Sometimes it is a simple job like replacing a broken finger post or adding an extra step to an existing stile to make it more user-friendly. Quite often the jobs require new structures which are now prepared either in members' own home workshops or at a facility kindly loaned free-of-charge to the Monday Group at St. George's Park Farm and Retirement Complex on Ditchling Common. The structures are then taken to the nearest point accessible by vehicle and carried bodily, sometimes quite long distances, by team members to the site. Work continues until the installation is complete and can usually be accomplished in a morning.



"There is one major element of Monday Group activity," says Harold, "which I had come to realise quite early on but hadn't really expected, or initially seen as a purpose of the Group. This is the social aspect, the regular working together every Monday morning under all weather conditions, throughout the year, with a worthwhile common purpose. Of course, this is no mere hobby. The work is physical and can be quite demanding, but the shared endeavour, working practices, skills and banter

SEATING ARRANGEMENTS (for country bumkins?)



Near The Plough in Plumpton Lane, MG East's Barry McMenamin (L) and Alf Eagleton give an ailing country seat their full backing



MG West installs a new bench at Bachelor's Farm, Burgess Hill



L-R John Hizzey, Derek Mackelworth, John Card, Francis Hooper, Andy Hall



MG East at south end of Novington Lane



MG West same design but with one-piece seat



Mk.11 stile-cum-bench provides a popular posterior-parking facility



From time to time the Monday Group receives commissions to make commemorative structures such as this fine five-seater bench for Chailey Common. Jim Edwards (in blue jeans) built it from exclusive air-dried oak



(but it took the additional weight of Giles Dickens, Tom Walker and Harold Rowling to make sure it was settled down properly.)

There is a stile-builder called Jim
Not many can keep up with him
In three years, no more
He's made fifty-four*
With green oak, with skill and with vim
(*Just look and you'll see, they're all signed JE)

But stiles are just part of his trade
The boxes and benches he's made
For folk, beasts and birds
Are good beyond words
And sold for the Monday Group's aid



naturally develop a strong social bond and create lasting friendships. This is borne out by the fact that we very rarely lose a member except through illness or death. Inevitably and necessarily differences of opinion enrich and enliven the life of the Group but possibly only one member has left due to a disagreement with another (and that was over a lady).

Most of our members have been with us for many years, one from the very beginning of the Monday Group in 1961.

"For me this aspect of the Monday Group is very important. We have a group of men and increasingly, over the years, women, who have come to the end of their working lives and need the companionship and general discussion which they've had all their lives but which they miss as soon as they retire. The Monday Group fulfils that need and does so in the most attractive working conditions for those who like the countryside."



The lack of a formal structure could be seen as a recipe for chaos and undoubtedly the Monday Group, like any other manifestation of human endeavour, contains elements of chaos as well as order since the one cannot exist without the other. Nevertheless, given that the Group has been doing its good things for half a century, it would seem that it has got the balance about right.



GREAT STILES FROM GREEN OAKS GROW



An important characteristic of the Monday Group is the insistence Harold has always had on quality:

"Stiles, mainly farmers' stiles (which we always call 'Dog and Stick' stiles, named after pre-war farmers who did little active work on sheep farms, hence 'Dog and Stick' farming), are notorious for their inadequacy and dangerous condition. Why should a farmer build a decent stile? He doesn't believe in walkers anyway. So, right from the beginning I said we would always build decent stiles that last and that's the origin of my insistence that we always use oak; unseasoned, green oak. This is another unique feature of the Monday Group as oak is always considered too expensive and



not readily available from local timber suppliers. The building trade, farmers and local authorities always use softwood but there is no point or saving in doing a lot of work in softwood, which might cost less but would last for only a few years before having to be replaced, necessitating the same amount of work and materials again.

"Most of the volunteers joining the Monday Group are of course unskilled and certainly none will have built a stile before, but fortunately, in addition to myself, we had one or two men, Reg Adsett and John Bridgland in particular, who were by their natures and training, skilled workers in whatever they did, accurate and very careful.

At Barcombe Mills there stands a structure, it's a bridge of single span, Monday Groupers built and placed it, one of them was John Bridgland,
 O no John, no John, no John, no!
 As John worked on that single spanner, tight'ning nuts and bolts and screws,
 Suddenly his only spanner, fell into the River Ouse,
 O no John, no John, no John, no!
 But Quickly John drove home to Hassocks, quite unflustered by the thing,
 Bringing back a powerful magnet, fastened to a length of string,
 O what John, what John, what John, what?
 The magnet went down through the water, making contact at first try,
 Up then came the submerged spanner, lost and found and home and dry,
 O yes John, yes John, yes John, yes!
 Then John simply went on working, as if nothing had occurred,
 Finishing what he had started, none the worse and undeterred.



BRIDGES OVER THE YEARS

< First bridge, Streat early 1980's

Plumpton Mill >



Top
Above
Left

Keymer
Streat
Ditchling
Churchyard

Below
Bottom

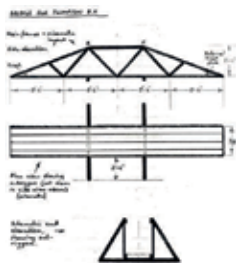
East
Chiltington
Barcombe
Mills



HAROLD'S BEST BRIDGE (so far)

"In 1998 we were asked by ESCC to replace a bridge near the old Chailey Airfield. This spanned a stream and was about 20' long, with a drop of about 7' to the water level. The original, rotting bridge needed to be moved to one side to allow installation of the replacement. There was no other solution but to move it by hand. A rope was produced and tightly attached to one end of the structure so that 6 of us could heave it sideways. This we duly did but just before the task was complete, without warning, the elderly rope parted, depositing all 6 workers on their bottoms in a heap – quite a comical sight and nobody injured. Needless to say, my request for a repeat performance to enable me to take a photo was emphatically turned down." *Barry McMenamin*

The old, softwood bridge was just 2 long beams with short planks laid across them. Its last function was to provide a platform for the team as the replacement was installed.



"The new oak bridge, built at the workshop, disassembled for transportation and reassembled on site, is designed on the Warren Frame principle, a girder design based on a number of interlocking triangles, the most rigid frames possible. The main advantages of the Warren Frame are that it does not require long lengths of beams, the sections used to form the triangles can be relatively small, hand rails are not required since the frames make these redundant and construction is simple using bolts. A longer and higher bridge would need overhead bracing but the four outriggers were sufficient in our case. The most important < elements of the Warren Frame are the gusset plates which join each triangle to its neighbour. The footway is strengthened by designing it as a mini-bowstring beam. Our bridge is laid on concrete slabs on each bank to give stability on the soil and reduce erosion by soil and plants. It is essentially an engineer's structure."

Harold Rowling



1998

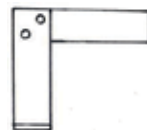


2012

A recent thorough inspection declared the main structure sound. Nevertheless a few minor repairs and renovations have been carried out during which only one man nearly fell over.



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"We have maintained this tradition to the present, the quality of workmanship being very high indeed and though the volunteers coming in are from all walks of life, bankers, railwaymen, schoolmasters, insurers, systems analysts, even an artist, they soon pick up our work methods and become as skilled as the rest. This is one of the pleasures for me: to see people normally only used to basic DIY at home being able to make a decent quality stile that will last for 20 or 25 years."

The Monday Group now has over 30 active members operating in 4 separate teams: the East Sussex Clearance and Structure-Building Groups and the West Sussex Clearance and Structure Building Groups They go out every Monday without fail, in rain, snow or shine.

Winter work: Harold and Giles Dickens snow-bound for the next job



Jim had to remove his gloves to take this photo

*There was an old teacher called Giles
Loved walking for miles and miles
He was really quite shocked
To find footpaths blocked
So he joined up to help put in stiles
(GD 2011)*

XXIX

WEST SIDE STORY

The Monday Group is divided into two main parts, East and West. Retired British Rail accountant, keen gardener and skilled wood-worker, John Card, succeeded Frank Cooper as leader of MG West in 1997. John is also his group's principal designer. It's a smaller group than MG East, with 6 in the current structure building team, and its own clearance group. The 'Squeeze' is the West's stile of choice, easily negotiable by the walking public and, where necessary, adaptable for stock-proofing. They also occasionally make kissing gates (arguably a good alternative to stiles). At one time, the Monday Group had a specialist team who restored and maintained Victorian ironwork kissing gates. Working largely to order or commission MG West also builds benches, notice-boards and causeways, particularly the walkways at Bachelor's Farm in Burgess Hill (see CAUSEWAY AND EFFECT page) For the most part the West Group, which has its own workshop, confines its activities to West Sussex, indirectly receiving annual grants from WSCC through local Parish Councils.



Between Burgess Hill & Haywards Heath, West of Clearwater Farm
July 2000
L-R
John Card
John Watkins
Ian Anderson
(MG West's photographer)

<Before After>



When did the kissing have to stop?
When the gate was finished!



L-R: Andy Hall, John Card, Derek Mackelworth, Francis Hooper and John Hizzey with an allotment notice board.

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CAUSEWAY AND EFFECT

Monday Groups East and West join forces to install a 75' boardwalk, over flood-prone terrain on Footpath 20, Bachelors Farm, Burgess Hill. This was the longest of two such structures on the same site commissioned from Monday Group West by Burgess Hill Town Council and designed by the Leader of MGW, John Card



Designed by
John Card
MGW 2009



XXXI



NAMING OF PARTS

Harold, an engineer by profession, hand picked by Frank Whittle during the war, and working for many years with Shell International, has, from the outset, taken delight in designing all the stiles and other structures, especially bridges, needed throughout the area of the Monday Group's operations. A stile has four main requirements:



John Watkins of MG West

First and foremost it must be stock-proof. If it isn't then the farmer won't allow it and will modify it until his stock can't get through or over it and neither can the less able walkers.

"You're kidding me, nobody's watching! Now just help me over will you!"

Secondly, it has to be readily usable by walkers of all ages.

Harold tests the next best thing to a stair lift, an extra step added to an old stile. Heights of treads are always scrupulously measured to ensure ease of negotiation by the elderly or less able.



Thirdly, it has to be easy and relatively quick to install, at any time of year since it cannot be left without being stock-proof or usable by walkers.



New stiles are built in the workshop and usually carried to the site in one piece depending on the distance involved.

In addition to these, a stile must be of sound, stable, safe and durable construction with no part of it posing an avoidable hazard to users.

With these firmly in mind, a succession of stiles has been designed, built and installed to meet a diversity of needs in many different locations.

Each stile type - the Mark 20 is the most recent - has evolved through a gradual process of modification and refinement. Naturally, over time, these structures, or parts of them, deteriorate and need repairing or replacing. Improvements can always be made and Harold, now 90, is particularly concerned that a stile should be negotiable by elderly walkers.

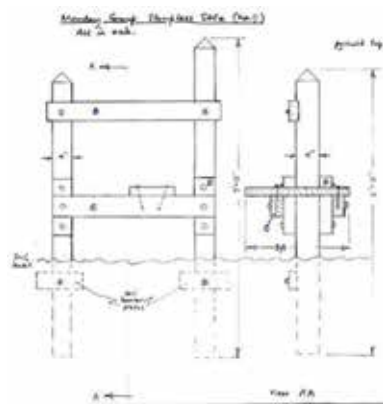
The walking public plays a vital part, alongside Monday Group members themselves, in alerting the Group to any needful alterations or potential hazards.

THE SIX STILES OF WISDOM - MAKING THEIR MARKS



Mk.5

These 6 significantly different structures represent the key points in the Monday Group's 50 year quest for the ideal stile. (The dog-gates attached to some of them are a more recent innovation). Naturally the passage of time has revealed each stile-type's weaknesses as well as strengths leading to the need for adjustments, modifications and refinements. The walking public as well as the ever watchful Monday Group itself, plays an important part in identifying the need for these improvements.



Mk.9



Mk.11



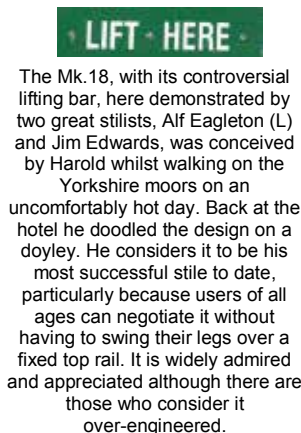
Squeeze



Mk.15



Mk.18



The Mk.18, with its controversial lifting bar, here demonstrated by two great stilists, Alf Eagleton (L) and Jim Edwards, was conceived by Harold whilst walking on the Yorkshire moors on an uncomfortably hot day. Back at the hotel he doodled the design on a doyley. He considers it to be his most successful stile to date, particularly because users of all ages can negotiate it without having to swing their legs over a fixed top rail. It is widely admired and appreciated although there are those who consider it over-engineered.



Mk.18



Changes in weather patterns, for example flooding occurring where it used not to, generate the need for bridges or causeways in order to keep footpaths and other rights-of-way clear and safe to use.

It is thus important to note that, as well as building and installing stiles and other structures of the highest quality, the Monday Group will always respond quickly and its 'after-sales-service' is second to none.

Just how many structures the Monday Group has provided for the safe use of walkers would be hard to judge, but within a 5-mile radius of Westmeston perhaps as many as a thousand stiles alone have been built, installed and maintained during the last half-century.

A herd(le) of Mark 18 stiles in preparation at St. George's workshop





THE MONDAY GROUP AND THE MEDIA

The Monday Group's media career began in the 80's and continues to this day which is hardly surprising considering how photogenic all its members are, what it does and where it does it.

Articles about the Group have been published in:
The Rambler (autumn 1989); **Country living** (March 1995);
Country Walking (May 1997); **Sussex Living** (October 2011)
 and a centre spread in the **Mid Sussex Times** (December 2011)

Television features – see stills below - have been on:
Country Ways (September 1990); **Meridian News** (1996);
 and most successfully on **Country File** (1996) which has been repeated four times so far.



The revolutionary stretcher-bridge designed with health and safety in mind.



You can take out a bridging loan but never take out a bridge alone.



Restoring the path above the chalk-pit on the Westmeston side of Ditchling Beacon. Due to erosion and the dangerous drop this became a major Monday Group project.



Dogged determination



XXXVI



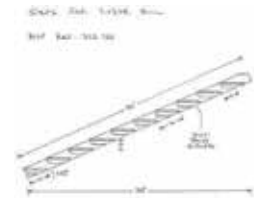
John Bridgland points a new finger-post in the right direction.

Demonstrating a dog gate

HAVE YOU BOOKED YOUR FLIGHT?



< A flight of separate steps near Westmeston church. Each riser is set into the soil and held in place by wooden stakes or steel pipes. This method has been abandoned by the Monday Group since the wood can rot more quickly in the damp ground and, as the soil treads are compressed through use or washed down by the rain, the top edges of the risers can become a trip hazard. On the other foot, the staircase > which encases the steps in a single structure, keeps the treads off the ground and has much greater stability.



These days the Monday Group builds most of its stairways and even single steps as whole units which can be prepared in the workshop as a kit and assembled on site.



This 22-tread flight, is one of their longest to date, replacing a rotting, softwood ESCC stairway on Barcombe old railway line, now a public footpath.

The operation was filmed by the BBC in 1990.

Right
 Removing the obsolete flight

Far right
 The 1990 replacement flight as it is now (2012)



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The photographs of Monday Group structures in this book amply demonstrate the variety and ingenuity of the work. No wood glues, and a minimum of nails, are used in their construction. Heavy-duty screws and steel nuts and bolts, all liberally anointed with grease for extra protection, hold the components together with maximum strength, ensuring great stability, whilst, at the same time, facilitating repair or replacement of worn, rotted or broken parts in the long-term, without damaging the whole. Although 'digless' stiles, which simply stand, like a piece of furniture on the ground, are sometimes installed if the terrain is suitable, the legs of the majority are shallowly interred and tamped in. Additional immobility is provided by anchoring structures to the soil with steel angle irons. Not only humans are catered for. Dog gates are either built in to stiles or added if the need arises, and not only to Monday Group stiles. A weather eye is always kept on any structure, no matter who made it originally. This also applies to ensuring that under and over growth do not hamper easy access to and use of these facilities.

MONEY DOESN'T GROW ON OAK TREES!

While MG West continues to receive indirect WSCC funding through local parish councils, the larger Monday Group East, which was, for a number of years, granted a substantial annual amount by ESCC, has unfortunately, due to changes of policy, staff and cut-backs in recent years, had that important financial help

DAME VERA LYNN LAUNCHES THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY STILE

**Harold Rowling MBE,
Jim Edwards**
who built the stile,
and **Dame Vera Lynn**

The unveiling of the Monday Group 50 year celebratory stile took place at 11am on Tuesday November 29th 2011 on the Westmeston Jubilee Pathway and was performed by Dame Vera Lynn – a well known Ditchling resident for over 50 years so it was appropriate for her to honour the event.



As it was not possible to have the ceremony on a Monday, not all MG members were able to attend.

Those present were - L to R:

Sally Godley, Joyce Johnson, Susan Taylor, Fran Bridger, Rita Hemsley, Jim Edwards, Mary Tree, Sheila Tester, Barry McMenamin, John Card, Allan Hoare, Tom Meekings, Joe Wilkinson, Giles Dickins, Alf Eagleton

Front row L-R: Pam Rowling, Harold Rowling and Ron Sharp





withdrawn. However, Harold Rowling has received a booklet from ESCC, full of health and safety advice on how to conduct oneself in the countryside, avoid accidents and use tools properly. So the Monday Group has become increasingly reliant on private donations and its own fund-raising efforts such as jumble sales, coffee mornings and the making and selling of bird and wildlife boxes, tables and feeders, crafted partly from oak leftover from the Group's work. Commissions are always welcomed and, some fine picnic tables, benches, commemorative or otherwise, and other structures for private use, have resulted. Landowners and sometimes farmers, who have come to respect the work of the Monday Group over the years, are now willing to donate all or a part of the £150 cost of a new stile on their land. Yet, in order to keep doing its good works for another 50 years, the Monday Group will continue to need financial support.

There was a Rowling man who walked a rolling mile
He found a rolling sixpence upon a rolling stile
He bought some good green oak
to stop the stile from rolling
Which made him very popular
with people who go strolling.

Now after fifty years there's lots more rolling men
As well as rolling women all rolling to one end
They roll around the Weald
They clear those rolling miles
They mend or replace bridges
And causeways, steps and stiles

They are the Monday Group, retired and older folk
Who like to work together and all enjoy a joke
They tend our rights-of-way
Perhaps you'd like to join?
Or if you have a sixpence
Then maybe spare a coin?



The Rowling man packs up for the day but he's been herd.

XL

A FEW WORDS ON STILES

A stile is,
something
The word goes
to the prehistoric
stig (climb) the
English stair,
and of German

etymologically,
you climb.
back ultimately
Germanic base
source also of
stirrup etc,
(climb or rise)

steigen

There was an old man who said, 'How/ Shall I flee from
that horrible cow?/I will sit on this stile/And continue to smile
Which may soften the heart of that cow.'
Edward Lear

Does the devil possess you? You're leaping over the bridge before you
come at the stile.
Miguel Cervantes
Don Quixote

May they stumble, stage by stage/ On an endless pilgrimage,/Dawn and dusk, mile
after mile,/At each and every step, a stile;
Robert Graves

Jog on, jog on, the footpath way, /And merrily hent the stile-a,/A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad tires in a mile-a.

William Shakespeare

A Midsummer Night's Dream

This book commemorates the 50th anniversary of
THE MONDAY GROUP 1961 – 2011

It is respectfully dedicated to Harold Rowling MBE founder of
the Monday Group and all its members past and present alive or dead

My thanks are due to all members who contributed to this book especially
Reg Adsett, John Card, Giles Dickins, Jim Edwards, Barry McMenamin
Tom Meekings, and, of course, Harold Rowling
TW 2012



**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE MONDAY GROUP OR
MAKE A DONATION OR
TELL US ABOUT A JOB THAT NEEDS DOING,
PLEASE CONTACT US EITHER:**

**VIA OUR WEBSITE :
WWW.MONDAYGROUP.ORG**

**BY E-MAIL ON :
MONDAYGROUP.ORG@GMAIL.COM**

**BY PHONE ON : 07510 127161
(TEXT US OR LEAVE A VOICEMAIL MESSAGE)**