

## Woodford Mill to Ringstead

The walk on Sunday, 20th March started from the Woodford Mill Tea Rooms just outside the village of Ringstead.

The Tea Rooms are popular with walkers, cyclists and the local dog walkers. Most of the early morning breakfasts they offer are taken by the boat owners from the quite extensive marina opposite called the Willy Watt Marina.



The weather, though forecast cloudy, turned out to be bright and sunny. With adequate parking, our lunches booked and registration complete, we set off along a path at the rear of the Tea Rooms and joined a disused railway cutting for about half a mile. A Red Kite circled in the blue sky above and Dunnocks and Robins serenaded us from the hedge rows and bramble tops.



We crossed an old iron bridge over the River Nene before turning up a steep slope that swung us back over the railway cutting to a farm track. This was very muddy in places and eventually led us to the village of Ringstead. The farmer, with tractor and plough, was out early today with a white cloud of countless gulls following in his wake, squeaking and fighting for the invertebrate delights unearthed by the passage of his plough.

Several famous people were born in Ringstead, namely: [Ernest Hemingway](#), [Humphrey Bogart](#), [Winston Churchill](#) and [Jonathan Edwards](#). The centre of the village, marked by the prominent spire of St Mary's church, was only seen from a distance as we skirted to the side through a housing estate.



According to tradition, the entrance to St Mary's churchyard has been haunted by the ghost of a village girl, Lydia Atley, who disappeared in 1850. What were thought to be her skeletal remains were unearthed in 1864 in a local orchard. The village butcher, Weekly Ball, was tried for Lydia's murder but acquitted because it proved impossible to conclusively identify the skeleton as that of the missing girl.



Passing through two kissing gates and a fenced walkway, we entered the parkland around Kinewell Lake. The many lakes and islands around Ringstead were formed by sand and gravel extraction during the 1980's. Some tree planting and development of the site has made it a haven for most of the common ducks and geese species.

As we skirted the side of the lake we were noisily intercepted by some of the more friendly and greedy avian friends. Not having any grain to give them they were unlucky this time and we passed on.



The path took us through two ploughed fields, where we had magnificent views to both sides across the countryside. Unfortunately the horizon to one side was blighted by a massive warehouse built near the Raunds roundabout on the A45. Returning once again to the lake side we rejoined the railway cutting and the point of our departure.



The weather had been good to us, though cool at times on open ground. We removed our boots and returned to the tea rooms for our lunch.