

Kettering - September 2016

Thirteen of us gathered at The Piper public house on the outskirts of Kettering on this slightly overcast morning. The car park was not that big but, being only a small number this time, we were easily accommodated.



Having signed in, and those staying for Sunday lunch had booked their meal, we set off with our walk leader, Angela Folwell. Passing down the road between houses for a short distance, we took a path by a magnificent skate park and into an area of rough meadow. In the far distance to the right the view extended to our objective that morning, the grounds of Wicksteed Park. High on the horizon stood the white gantry of the swing boat ride, pinpointing the highest part of the park.

Crossing the busy A6003, we entered a sheep field and cricket ground. The sound of willow against leather was heard no more this late in the season as we passed the green swath on our right. Reaching the bottom of the field a spring had erupted along the path. With a small detour and only a few wet feet we made the gate at the entrance to the church. The finger pointer on the path marker from whence we had come said water meadows, very true.



The church yard of St Botolph in the village of Barton Seagrave was flooded, not that it bothered the inhabitants nor the Pastor who was welcoming his congregation to morning service. Through the village, passing pretty thatched cottages, we entered the clearly signed Wicksteed Nature Reserve. Walking on through an arboretum we absorbed the tranquillity of the moment in silence, other than for the chatter of the back marker and friend!



Marching over a small brook - we did not need to break step as there were only thirteen of us - we entered the park. All the old favourites came into view. The water chute built in 1926, (though I never remembered it looking like a rusty skip on the end of a cable) shot down to our right. We then gathered expectantly at the bottom waiting for the second ride to appear. Most of us remembered two goes for our money, only one now it appears, must be austerity cuts.

We wended our way past all manner of carriages and cars on tracks on and above the ground. Suddenly a loud whistle made us turn and, there it was, still running and as big a favourite as ever, the miniature railway train.

There were some new buildings, others were shabby from neglect but, in spite of this, the place still holds happy memories of visits passed.

We were delighted to see an Egret, a Heron and a Peacock during our walk round Wicksteed Park. A monument to Charles Wicksteed stands in a memorial garden commemorating his construction of the park in 1921, being the second oldest park in the UK.



And so we walked on - we were not tempted by the Meercat tunnels, by which we humans can burrow in amongst our furry friends and observe them through the glass bubbles, or the high walks and slide tunnels. Our objective now was the final circumvention of the lake and return for our Sunday lunch. And very nice it was too.

