

## Barnwell – March 2017

The start of our walk this week, led by Len and Anne Johnson, was the traditional English pub, the Montagu Arms, a quaint hostelry situated in the centre of the quiet village of Barnwell. The village supports two 13<sup>th</sup> century Church of England Churches reflecting the fact that the village is formed from two separate ones, Barnwell All Saints and Barnwell St Andrews. South-east of the All Saints church are Latham's Almshouses (founded 1601, rebuilt 1874).



A castle to the north, built around 1266, is an English Heritage Grade 1 listed building, alongside 35 other listed buildings, including a telephone box, which are found in the village. The owner of the castle during the English Civil War, was Sir Edward Montagu, and his family continued ownership moving into Barnwell Manor House close by. The house and the estate were bought by the Duke of Gloucester in 1938 and still retain ownership, although they now reside in an apartment in Kensington Palace.

After the usual formalities of signing in, the 21 strong group set off by the side of the pub and over the narrow listed bridge crossing the stream that meanders through the length of the village. Passing a well-kept green to our right, we left the village by a track leading through a swinging gate to a paddock. A Shetland pony didn't need much coaxing to come for an apple - its first treat of the day





Onward across two fields of grass onto a long stretch of arable land. Fortunately, the weather had been reasonably dry so progress was not hindered by mud. The wind however blew strongly to our side bringing the hum of the A605 traffic to our ears. This must always be a windy area, as in 2013 an application by West Coast Energy to build a wind Farm close to the Manor was dismissed after an appeal supported by the wife of Ed Miliband. The Duke of Gloucester, however, had supported the plan from his residence in London.

During our walk the song of the Chiffchaff, a summer migrant, was heard for the first time by many, Red kites hung in the air and violets graced the mossy banks. Less agreeable wildlife was an aggressive Border terrier who took exception to "Billy Boy" a small Canine member of our party. This terrier had to be wrestled off poor Billy Boy's neck by its apologetic owner.



Arriving at Wigsthorpe, we stopped for sustenance and a chance for the back markers to catch up. After passing uphill through this Hamlet, the return to Barnwell was downhill all the way across fields. The approach to the village brought into sight a recently constructed flood bank, reminding us how an idyllic village stream can become a torrential danger unless defences like this are put in place. The meandering celandine bordered stream led us back to the Montagu Arms. The meal for those who had pre booked arrived on the dot of one o'clock and was much appreciated by all.