

## Foxton – April 2017

The walk this week started from the Black Horse in Foxton village and was led by Phil and Josie George. The weather was fine with a bright blue, virtually cloudless sky. The turnout of 21 was good considering we were venturing into another county, Leicestershire. With signing in preliminaries complete, those staying for a meal after the walk ordered their meals. The landlady was rather 'stressed' due to staff illness and shortages, but we hoped that our meals would arrive reasonably on time when we got back.

Setting off out of the pub gardens, we joined the Market Harborough arm of the Grand Union Canal for a hundred yards before striking off to the right through a small copse and across open fields to cross what was now the Grand Union Canal itself. The foot bridge was narrow and it was as well we were crossing before we had eaten our Sunday dinner!



Passing through a mixed field of cows, bulls and calves we could see the village of Gumley and Gumley Wood in front of us on the rise. As we approached the exit gate of the field the beasts started to converge on us, probably thinking we had food for them.

Gumley Wood is strictly private and skirting to the west side we saw the woodland floor carpeted blue with Bluebells as far as the eye could see. The pleasant sweet smell of the blooms wafted to our nostrils on the warming morning air. The next animal encounter was with horses on the rise towards the Debdale Lane. They only wanted a bit of fuss, and Finbarr commented that he thought they would not be entering the Grand National.



Crossing the Debdale Road, we descended fields to the Grand Union Canal again and to easy tow path walking. There were few passing boats out on the water that morning and it wasn't until Debdale Wharf Marina was reached were many boats seen. Although we saw sheep with lambs and special breed pigs, the strangest sight was of two deer on the top of a boat. Both having big red noses, they must have been called Rudolf. Cleverly crafted out of a log and pieces of hedge they stood proud on the cabin roof.



Foxton Locks, the Café and Foxton Locks Inn were humming with visitors sitting in the sun, beer in hand. None of us were tempted to climb the flight of Locks, which was the continuation of the Grand Union, but all turned over a swing bridge which marked the start of the Harborough Arm. Again, the tow path led us onward finally rewarding us with the sight of Foxton village and the Black Horse car park.



Although our meal here was slow in coming, it turned out to be very satisfactory. The landlady apologised for her brusqueness at the start so all was well.