

Cosgrove -November 2017



The walk this Sunday was through Cosgrove Country Park. The weather was cool with a bright blue sky, an ideal day for walking. The group had visited here before but this time a different route was proposed.

The start point was the Barley Mow in the village of Cosgrove. Cosgrove, or 'Couvesgrave' as it was called in the Domesday records, means 'a wooded area'. The village has a church, St Peters and St Paul which dates back to the 13th Century with a 70 foot tower and six bells.

There is a hall dating back to the 18th Century which was ravaged by fire in 2016. Standing on the south side of the canal, it was built on the site of a Roman villa, Roman bath house and Temple.

After the normality of signing in and welcoming new members, including a local photographer, 20 of us took the path leaving the pub, down the road and under the Grand Union Canal via a horse tunnel. Being only just six foot high it reflects how small the horses were that pulled the barges.

A sharp right turn on exiting took us to the towpath. A linear track stretched out for half a mile up to the Iron Trunk Aqueduct taking the canal over the River Great Ouse. The canal moorings had the usual mix of mostly narrow boats varying from the well-attended down to the decrepit. It was the weekend and time to polish the brasses or look forlornly at an unresponsive engine. The first and only lock we were to pass marked the start of the Buckingham arm (aka the Stratford arm), now a possible restoration project.

Peeking over the wall on our side of the tow path was a small menagerie. There was leaning to South American species evident from the number of Alpacas munching away at their breakfast.



After crossing the Aqueduct a path and steps to the left brings us steeply down to the River Great Ouse and the entrance to the Country Park. The river stays on our left and follows the well maintained path for much of our journey. One side of the river is the caravan and pleasure park with boating and sports lake, the other to the right is the recently developed Forest Floodplain Nature Reserve. The whole of this area is liable to flooding forming part of the natural annual cycle of nature.

Turning left over a bridge crossing a side stream flowing from the reserve into the Great Ouse, we stopped to allow stragglers to catch up and consume our snacks. Our munching attracted a passing Dachshund puppy which, though endearing, was not fed. Further on we entered the reserve by the Viaduct hide gate and followed a fenced path past the first bird hide. Views from this hide were over the scrape, this an island devoid of vegetation created predominantly for wading birds. We hastened on keeping the mostly overgrown stream to our left. On reaching the so-called Trunk bird hide we exited the reserve, the curving path taking us back to the steps leading up to and over the Aqueduct.



Although this had not been a long walk by our standards, the Sunday lunch seemed very far away at the end of a seemingly endless towpath stretching into the far distance. Retracing our route through the horse tunnel, we were back at the Barley Mow. The Sunday carvery was locally sourced beef and Old Spot pork. A tasty end to our walk.