

Cottingham – February 2018

Last month we had battled snow and ice, today a warm front had given us fog, not a pea super but one which would hide the splendid cross country views expected on this our February Sunday walk around the East Carlton Country Park.

We assembled in the Royal George car park in the village of Cottingham. This Inn, dating back to the 13th century, claims to be one of the oldest Inns in England. It was named after the "Royal George", a flagship commissioned in 1870, and has since undergone many changes and modernisation.

After a comprehensive description of the proposed walk by our leader, Sue Milner and all formalities completed we set off for a walk of approximately 3.5 miles (with Sue Pearson as back marker). The Royal George is at the top of Cottingham so our path led us downhill to the Church, through a kissing gate and followed a slightly muddy path which finally brought us out in Middleton. The descent on an extremely steep side road took us past the Red Lion pub that is now closed.

Crossing the main road, we took a path leading along the ridge which should have given us views across the Welland Valley, but unfortunately they were obscured by the descending mist. What we did see was a pony exercising Gym. A circular building with a carousel of rotating arms to guide the ponies around and around. Whatever next, weights?

A sharp left turn took us into the Country Park amongst tall beech trees. The path though slightly muddy was on the whole well-made and easy going on the slight incline. Some trees had been damaged in the recent gales and the park had not been slow in making use of the timber by skilfully carving their upright structure into majestic totem poles. Between them the ground was a snowy white carpet of snow drops, a scene repeated throughout the park. The facilities here include a café, shop, play areas for kids and sculptures in the form of machinery taken from the Corby Steel Works, though what they were used for originally was a mystery.



Exiting the park by the main entrance and drive, the Hall that was originally the country seat of the Palmer family, stood majestically on our right. In 1920 the Hall and Park were leased to the Firth family of Sheffield steel fame and then to Stewarts and Lloyds steel works of Corby in 1934. It was also used recently as a convalescent home and business centre. There is of course a ghost - she is called the 'Lavender Lady'. Her perfume wafts on the air, including the Coach house now the Heritage Centre, when she is out haunting.



From the grounds of the park we walked into neighbouring East Carlton. With the singing of the choir in St Peters church to our left and the munching of a herd of Reindeer in the field to our right, we made our return along the Jurassic Way, a path skirting the edge of the park. Views to our left were promised over to Corby but were again rather obscured because of the mist. We did however stopped for a group photo and a bite to eat and then continued our return to Middleton.



Taking the winding uphill road the two villages merged into one. The Royal George was now at last in sight. Most of us stayed for the Sunday lunch which was the usual choice of roasts. Everyone agreed that the meal here was excellent.