

Grendon – April 2018

The spring had finally sprung and indeed the bird was on the wing - a Swallow, the first we had seen this year, flying over the thatched roof of the Half Moon Public House, the start of our walk from the village of Grendon.

We are always glad to see new faces join our walks and this week was no exception. The usual formalities completed, Phil George, our leader, took us along the Main Road and through the church yard of St Mary. The Church is built from ironstone rubble and is purported to have grotesque wooden carvings of a leering husband and his nagging wife modeled on a local couple.



Leaving the village downhill, a swing gate took us to open fields and a soggy muddy path, which was to be the theme for most of the walk today due to the abundance of rain in recent weeks. The route would circumvent Castle Ashby Manor, rebuilt in the late 16th century for the Marquise of Northampton, and its presence could be seen to the north. A short stretch of road past the Menagerie ponds (brought back memories for some of us of swimming there in a youthful past) allowed the removal of some of the accumulated mud.

Passing Park Hill Farm the strident song of a Song Thrush and the repetitive 'chiff' of a Chiffchaff filled the air. The route, now turning south, should have given extensive views to the village of Easton Maudit, but today we were denied this as the mist was slow to clear. The village, originally named Easton was renamed Easton Maudit after its purchase by the Maudit family in the 12th century. The church of St Peter and St Paul is at its centre. The grave of the actor Derek Nimo is in its grounds but we didn't look for his grave. We did however stop and gather next to the Great Tree, an Oak of many centuries whose demise was in the nineties and is now propped up with steel girders. John Bunyon and Charles Wesley preached under the tree when it was in its prime. The Hornbeam, which has been planted to replace it, will need to grow a bit before any preaching is done under its spreading bows.

Turning left and then taking a path to the right out of the village, three splendid Cedar of Lebanon trees were brought into view. These are all that remain on the site of Easton Maudit's Manor house. Not a brick remained after its purchase and demolition by the Compton family of Castle Ashby.



The final trudge across fields of winter wheat brought us back to the outskirts of Grendon and our return to the Half Moon, where our welcome was warm and friendly and neither leering nor nagging. Haddock and chips of substantial proportions was the meal of choice, ending a perfect walk.