

Brixworth - January 2019

This time last year the snow was flurrying around us and lay crisp and even on the ground. Today the sky was blue, bright blue, with not a cloud to be seen. The temperature was just above freezing but it looked very promising for our Brixworth walk. .



We were gathered in the carpark of The George Inn, one of two Brixworth pubs that were once used as hostelries for horses and men. However, only The George Inn was large enough to host the presence of Oliver Cromwell, who commandeered it prior to the battle of Naseby in 1645 and was said to have maintained a watch for the royalists from 'Cromwell's eye' – a tiny window which still exists in the old building.



After the usual formalities and food orders our group had swelled to 22, many still trying to walk off Christmas excesses no doubt. With Finbarr Finn our walk leader, we took the road opposite which led us out of the village via a walkway through some newer houses, then across the busy A508 Harborough Road and downward along a path into Brixworth Country Park.



Opened in 1997 with Millennium money, the Park has become a hub of activity with a cafe, a children's play area and cycle hire, with the water and surrounding woodland being a magnet for wildlife. A track through a copse of leafless trees brought us onto the wide asphalt track, so loved by cyclists and joggers, and it was this undulating road that we followed. With the expanse of Pitsford Reservoir water and the bright burning glow of the winter sun over the horizon to our right, negotiating oncoming cyclists and joggers proved to be quite difficult at times. Sausage dogs with wet undercarriages and Boxers tugging at their leads were just a few of our canine friends out today.



The Reservoir has a distinct narrowing that a wintering Great Northern Diver normally frequents, and it was at this point we took a gate and finger post to the left on a path skirting a field of very young bean plants.



Our return through farmland was undulating with fine views most of the way across the misty expanse of water through the still burning glow of the late morning sun. The ground was reasonably dry underfoot and we had a number of stiles to negotiate. Clambering over one, a flock of loudly bleating sheep came charging down the hill in the adjacent field. They obviously thought they were going to be fed.



Now nearing the end of our walk, the spire of Brixworth church, All Saints, once described as the finest Saxon Church north of the Alps, came into view. All Saints is one of the biggest in the country and was built around AD 680 by monks from Peterborough.

Changing the grass underfoot for tarmac again, a short roadside walk brought us downhill back to Brixworth and The George Inn. Sitting around tables set out for our convenience a hearty and much appreciated roast dinner was consumed.