

Foxton - May 2019

The start of our walk this Sunday was the popular venue of Foxton village where we were assembled in the car park of the Black Horse public house, which is approximately a quarter of a mile from the lock flight.



The canals during the industrial revolution were busy with commercial traffic. Nowadays, the canals are used more for leisure but today, as then, the narrow ten staircase locks act as a hiatus to the flow of traffic. To ease this and assist the flow of commercial traffic back in the day, an incline plane was installed to work in parallel with the locks. Using a counterbalancing action the boats inside metal cassons used gravity to rise up and down the gradient in a matter of minutes.



Sadly, only a vestige of the original mechanism remains but is still a popular Sunday attraction. Here gongoozlers frequent the basin to have a drink or a meal in the pubs and restaurants here. The basin forms the junction of the six mile stretch of the Market Harborough arm and the main Grand Union canal. The walk of approximately 5 miles would not visit the basin until our return.

After the usual formalities, 16 of us set off in warm sunlight, led by Josie and Phil George, taking a left over the bridge over the Market Harborough canal arm. We followed along its banks for a short distance before taking a virtually hidden path to the right through the hedge. A pleasant stroll through a wooded glade brought us back onto the canal tow path.



This time it would be the Grand Union canal and we would follow this for approximately two miles reaching Debdale Wharf and a relatively new marina with its clutch of narrowboats. Here the canal virtually turns back on itself forming a loop to the south west. At bridge 68 we rested for snacks and drinks and were treated with lovely views over open countryside towards Kibworth Beauchamps.

Walking along the tow path we passed many keen fishermen who all had a selection of rods of varying sizes. The bait they used was neatly arranged in containers of varying colours and conditions.



Crossing over bridge 68 a steep rise across two arable fields brought us onto a secondary road where, after 400yards, a foot path sign directed us past the outskirts of Gumley Wood. Here a rather wide stile used as a horse jump had to be navigated before descending the next field to be met with a friendly horse who allowed us to pass the gate he was guarding.

The ascent past a farm reunited us with the Grand Union canal again. A very tall but narrow foot bridge took us across the canal. Turning right along the tow path brought us back to the hubbub of the Foxton Locks Basin, where taking the Market Harborough arm for a quarter of a mile we arrived back to the Black Horse.



The pub had been advised of our slightly later arrival and had rescheduled our meals. In spite of this we had a memorable and varied Sunday lunch, which all agreed was excellent.