

## Woodnewton – November 2019

Woodnewton was one of the original settlements of the Rockingham Forest. The old houses of local limestone adorn Main Street behind which newer houses are hidden away. The White Swan, where our walk started from this Sunday, is in the confines of the Main Street along with the Manor House and a converted Wesleyan Chapel.



After the normal formalities of signing in and food orders for those wishing to stay, 15 walkers set off for what promised to be a wet start. However, leaving the village past the 12th century St Mary's Church a small patch of blue sky gave hope of a rain free morning.



Crossing the road at the Church corner, the way led to Conegar Farm which was once a water mill in the 18th century. The Mill stream was running in torrents due to the recent excessive rain, disappearing madly away to the Willow Brook south of the village. Standing on the slightly curving mill bridge we mused on what a picturesque sight it made.

The way now leads up and away from the village through a hedge lined path to the summit with views over Rockingham Forest. This part of Northampton, north of Oundle, is a timeless land dotted with many small outcrops of the original forest and it was alongside one of these we went.



At one point, we walked through a farmyard only to be advised by the friendly farmer that we were actually on the wrong path. Realising our mistake, we apologised and set off smartly. This detour had actually shaved off half a mile of our walk.

There was much evidence of deer by the prints on the path ahead, but these were soon lost as a metaled drive was entered. Rowan Atkinson of Black Adder fame is reputed to have once had a residence close by. We carried on taking a finger post to the left to join our outward route.



A short diversion was taken to avoid the extremely muddy outward path, which was fortunate as we were rewarded with the view of a small herd of deer scampering away in the distance.



Returning to the village a visit to the graveyard of St Mary's was a must. Here hidden at the rear is the grave of Coco the red faced Clown, Nicolai Polakovs, the greatest Circus entertainer of the last century. Born in Latvia to Circus parents, his whole life was spent in the ring. Woodnewton, where he lived with his wife Valentina, is his final resting place having died there in 1974 aged 74. It is reputed that he was the inspiration for Ronald MacDonald, our friendly burger clown. Not for this reason the village honours him with a clown festival every three years to raise money for the local community amenities.



The walk had been approximately five miles and any hint of rain had stayed away and the sun had actually shone, albeit briefly. The lunch at The Swan arrived promptly and was delicious.

