

Welton – August 2020

With no club walk since last March, a large happy group of Shamblers gathered outside The White Horse in Welton for our August walk. Before we moved, Finbarr our walk leader, spoke on the importance of social distancing, sanitising and respecting the space of other walkers we might meet.

He also told us how Welton, picturesquely situated on Crockwell Hill, once had 6 springs and was fortified by the Romans as it was strategically close to Watling Street.



We left the village on country lanes with some nice sweeping views of the surrounding countryside. Before long we were crossing fields to reach the Grand Union Canal at Welton Marina. From here we strolled along the towpath exchanging greetings with the crews and captains of passing narrow boats. Before long we could hear the hum of the M1, and as we drew near Watford Gap we realised that in close proximity to our towpath and canal we had a mainline railway line. This mixed use rail line is Europe's busiest, also, the A5 or Watling Street, one of the Roman's major roads connecting the Kentish Ports through London and the heart of England to Wroxeter, and the M1, the longest motorway in the UK.

At Watford Locks we paused for snacks and watched the boats being raised or lowered on their way up and down the canal. Eventually we moved on, crossing the A5 in orderly manner and on across farmland heading for Ashby St. Ledgers. As we approached the village we could see the beautifully landscaped gardens of the Manor House with a variety of colourful trees and a lake in the far corner.



We could also admire the ancient, weathered stone of the Church of St. Leodegarius up ahead. Here we stopped for a socially distanced group photo and we were able to admire the lovely Manor House. An extra treat (ahem) was another history lesson from our walk leader.



The Manor House was once home to the Catesby family who had, over a few hundred years, a big influence in our country's history. William Catesby was Chancellor of the Exchequer to Richard III and fought with him on Bosworths Field, where he was captured and afterwards was the only prominent nobleman executed. His descendant, Robert Catesby, was a leading conspirator of the Gunpowder Plot and indeed much planning was done above the gatehouse. Robert also met an early grave when shot while on the run after the plot failed. Ivor Guest, Viscount Winbourne acquired the house in the early 20th century and employed Sir Edwin Lutyens, who over the space of 40 years created the lovely house it is.



Leaving the village, our path ahead was through a number of wheat fields but with the path narrow and the wheat wet we decided to walk around the fields, this added a little to our length of walk. A few, perhaps wiser, walkers took the last leg of our walk by road but we all reached Welton happily at the same time. Farewells were exchanged and a number of our party enjoyed a very nice Sunday lunch in the pubs spacious gardens.