

Arthingworth – October 2020

This was to be our October walk from the Bull's Head pub in the village of Arthingworth, and the chances of rain appeared small.

Arthingworth is a small village on the outskirts of Market Harborough almost crossing over into the Leicestershire border. It is mentioned in the Domesday Book, but there is some evidence that it was inhabited during Roman times. Arthingworth Manor, which was behind St Andrews Church, was left as a shell in 1967 and revealed walls probably from an older house. A stable block remains, now converted into a house but incorporating the Manor House staircase.



On the outskirts of the village can be seen the site of the medieval fish ponds. Also, nearby is an MOD site that appears to be a bunker complex, but it is difficult to find much information about this for obvious reasons. It was connected to the nearby Harrington Airfield, which was a Thor missile site back in the late 1950s.



After an introductory talk by our walk leader, Finbarr, and a welcome to three new walkers we were reminded of the latest guidelines to be followed regarding COVID. We were then ready to start our walk.

The proposed walk, thought to be approximately 5.5 miles, would take in part of the Midshires Way, the Macmillan Way and Jurassic Way. Today, 23 walkers took the short road to the outskirts of the village. A friendly wink from a cheeky Imp carved on a totem pole in an adjoining garden bade us farewell. The locals are proud of their village, evident from a sign reminding us not to litter or let dogs foul displayed on the farmer's gate.





Leaving the farm track, the steeply ascending path brought us to the summit with spectacular views to all sides. Well worth the huffing and puffing to get there.



The descent brings into view the steeple of Braybrooke church. On reaching the minor road to Greater Oxendon a small number who wished for a shorter walk left us, leaving the majority to take the foot path opposite.



With high hedges to both sides, and trying to avoid the temptation of the remaining profusion of overripe blackberry laden brambles, a fingerpost at its end directed us to the Brampton Valley Way.

Reaching the embankment signalled a convenient time to stop and take on water and fuel in the form of a welcome banana or biscuit. With a group photo opportunity taken and tired limbs rested, we were ready to continue.



With our torches drawn, we approached the Oxendon tunnel ...

Opened in 1859 its purpose was to transport iron ore by rail from Northampton works to the main line at Market Harborough. Since its closure in 1981, its only traffic is now cyclists, runners and ramblers.

The tunnel designed by George Stephenson, nephew of the famous "Father of the railways" George Stephenson, is about a quarter of a mile long. Halfway is an air shaft giving a brief glimpse of the sky above. In addition to torches, ear defenders were a requisite of the day. We had passed through raves on previous walks and thought today would be another event. Having blurrily reached the half way point and the dripping air shaft, the epicentre of the music was reached. Two young lads with key board, bass guitar and amplifier were the source of the entertainment. Fortunately the welcoming orb of light of the tunnel exit beckoned us back into the daylight.



The next turn was onto a concrete farm access road through a field of cows. We had been assured that they were quite amicable and, in spite of having calves, they paid us no attention apart from one frisky calf who ran across the path in front of us.



The farmer was obviously very conscious of the health of his herd as a special back scratcher had been constructed for them beneath a tree.

The homeward stretch now reached gave rise to new legs as thoughts of Sunday Roast came prevalent in our minds. The walk in fact turned out to be longer than previously thought and varied from 5.5 miles to almost 7 miles, depending on which technology was used. The correct length would appear to be 6.7 miles, so well done to all those who completed it as it was certainly longer than our usual walks.