

## Hackleton – November 2016

With the prospect of 80mph winds and torrential rain having been forecast, the walk from the White Hart in Hackleton would be a challenge. Gathering in the car park in relative tranquillity, new members were welcomed and water-proofs donned. Stuart then led our group down what is known appropriately as the 'wet day path' to Piddington.



Not being on the busy B526, unlike sister villages Horton and Hackleton, Piddington is a quiet backwater. This has not always been the case. Prior to the Roman invasion, it was a thriving Anglo Saxon wattle and daub settlement. The Romans later built a substantial Villa on a nearby site with resplendent mosaic floors, bath house and out buildings. Artefacts from the dig, which has been underway since 1979 by the Nene Archaeological Society, are on view in the Wesleyan Chapel (1851) in the village.

Now the call of the bells from the 13<sup>th</sup> century church of St John were resisted as we took a left path out of the village to cross two extremely muddy fields. Everyone had giant's feet after crossing what was Piddington's version of a primordial swamp, created after the heavy rain of the night before.



On entering a grassy sheep field, misty views across fields were forgotten and the preoccupation was mud removal. The resident sheep were reluctant to greet us knowing that meat was locally sourced.

Suddenly someone spotted three red deer stags over a hedge. One was a magnificent beast at bay and two were rutting. Alas, they were made of fibreglass, but they whet our appetite for a view of the real thing as we strode onto our next objective, Salcey Forest.

No Red or Muntjac deer were seen on our short detour into this forest of mainly Oak and Hazel, nor one of the three Salcey Oaks dating back to Norman times. Turning right at a cross roads, the leafy track was a straight run back to Piddington over a now disused railway track which later forms part of the Midshires way. The 'wet day path' led us back to Piddington and then to the White Hart where some of our rumbling stomachs were satiated by locally sourced lamb.



It had been a good day. The gale hadn't blown, the storm hadn't raged and our stomachs were full.

