

## Summer Leys Night Walk – December 2016

On a fairly clear and mild evening for winter time, we gathered in the car park at Summer Leys Nature Reserve for our evening Christmas walk. This area, once a gravel pit which also housed a railway line, is now a Special Protection area of grassland woodland and wetland to create the right conditions for wildlife. A haven to many breeding species, migratory birds also pass through the area.

Finbarr, our walk leader, explained that this was a walk with no styles, all of it along footpaths and no fields to cross. We set off at 7.15pm, our paths lit by torches as we walked and chatted along the track. Silhouettes of ducks and swans on the water were glimpsed during our walk in the moonlight, which shone periodically through the clouds.

The ground was quite dry and even at the start of the walk. However, as we ventured a little further, 'puddle' alerts were shouted out to spread the message for walkers to avoid getting splashed. Otherwise the terrain was easy and straight forward. The walk was completed in less than the estimated time of an hour.

Once back at the car park, feeling peckish for our shared supper, we all helped to unload the cars, retrieving the food and drink people brought and carried our winter evening picnic a short, convenient distance to the Pioneer bird watch shelter, just a few yards away from the car park.

With glowing Christmassy red tea lights distributed around the benches, we ate and drank by candlelight, tucking into a feast of homemade mince pies, sausage rolls and an array of sweet and savoury and nibbles, washed down by delicious warm mulled wine and rounded off by an After Eight.

Just for the joy of it, a few of us decided to burst into song and sang a few carols, whilst others just listened to the renditions. With a toast of good cheer for Christmas and to future walks, we enjoyed mingling with each other as we enjoyed talking, eating and drinking.

All hands to the deck to clear up the leftovers and bag up the rubbish to take home, leaving the hide as we found it. Another successful evening walk, the second of its kind.

Wishing all "The Shamblers" a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

