

## Twywell – July 2018 (Evening Walk)

We met at the Old Friar pub - the oldest part of which was built in the late 17th Century and with its coursed limestone, part thatch roof & leaded windows is the picture perfect old English Inn. Twywell is an English village and civil parish in the county of Northamptonshire.

Twywell is recorded in the Domesday Book as 'Twowelle' (meaning 'two wells') but can be dated back to the Iron Age. Manor House Farm dates from 1591 and some of the building material is thought to have come from an old monastery situated between Slipton and Sudborough at a site known as "Money Holes".

The village is centred along the High Street and The Green and there are nine buildings of special architectural or historic interest in the parish. The parish church is dedicated to St Nicholas.



The 1991 population was 179 in 87 dwellings. There was a butcher, an off-licence and a public house. The village is currently visited by a greengrocer and library. There is a bus service to Thrapston and Kettering.

Nearby Twywell Hills and Dales Country Park provides attractive countryside walks. Twywell Plantation, a wood belonging to the Woodland Trust, lies to the south and west of the village.

Twywell Hills and Dales is a 135 acre countryside site which takes its name from the abandoned quarry workings which created its undulating landscape. Most of the site has been allowed to revert back to nature and it is now a haven for rare wildlife, especially within the Gullet area.

The site has three distinct areas: Whitestones - an area where limestone quarrying took place; the Gullett - a deep gorge-like quarry formed by digging deep for ironstone; and the Wood - mainly coniferous and was created after the ironstone extraction ceased, beginning with the planting of European larch in 1932. Further planting took place during the 1950s including Corsican pine, Scot's pine and sycamore.

Our group of 7 set off in temperatures of around 26 degrees, even at 6.30pm, and went through a gap between some houses, past some allotments and into the nearby pastures shared with a few resting sheep. Eventually, we climbed several steep steps into the nearby woodland and then enjoyed the coolness of the shade. There were lots of wild flowers (including orchids and unusual thistles) around but not so many butterflies at this time of evening.



We eventually left the shade of the woods and passed through a gate into Twywell Hills and Dales Country Park where the path had previously been very muddy but was now very dry and cracked, so care was taken not to trip over any lumps and bumps.



The noise from the nearby A14 was quite loud at this point but it was not long before we descended into woodland again and turned away from the noise.

After crossing a meadow, we passed close to the car park of the Country Park and then ascended again so we could enjoy view across the Gullet and listen to the birdsong. We stopped for a rest on a handy bench and had refreshments before setting off again.

After crossing a field of maize, very conveniently growing in straight lines so we could find the path easily, we came to some fields of long grass where the walking was a bit more difficult but firm underfoot.

Passing by a large oak tree, we then turned through a gate into a field of very noisy sheep before finding ourselves on the road just outside Twywell.



At a bend in the road, we beat our way through some nettles and brambles (only a short distance) before climbing over a stile into a field that contained about 8 Alpacas, who all looked very interested at our arrival. One in particular was very friendly and came up for a pat on the head before going back to the rest of the herd.

We then passed close by Manor Farm where there was quite a menagerie of different birds in cages, including peacocks that were calling their distinctive cry. Back out on to the road again, it was just a short walk back to the Old Friar where a drink and snack was ordered, and we all sat outside in the lovely cool of the garden to relax before driving our separate ways.