

## Pavenham – August 2018

Our walk this month was from the Cock Inn at Pavenham. There were seventeen of us and after welcoming four newcomers and completing the usual formalities, Stuart Emmerson gave a brief but concise description of the morning's walk, this being a circular walk of just 4.5 miles. The weather was fine and warm, albeit quite cloudy, but with quite a brisk breeze.

Pavenham is a picturesque village just over the Northamptonshire border into Bedfordshire. With many light stone and thatched buildings, this mostly linear village rests at the side of the River Great Ouse. St Peter's Church supports

an impressive tower and eight sided spire with five bells. Being possibly 12th century, it has examples of the three phases of Medieval Architecture. The church yard is spacious with room to accommodate many more. The villagers have a healthy leaning towards sporting activities, including Cricket, Tennis, Football and Golf. The Cricket Club was formed in 1888 and has its Pavilion, which was built in 1967, on the village playing field.

Leaving the Cock Inn and turning left onto the High Street, Ruth, our walk leader, took us a short distance into Mill Lane. The water mill, closed in 1813, has long since been demolished. Turning left to walk at the rear of River Row cottages brought us to a once green paddock, the ground under foot now hard and deeply fissured from months without rain. Following the hedge line on the right we passed Pavenham Osier Beds, now a Nature Reserve managed by the wildlife Trust. Pavenham was once a centre for basket weaving, but no longer a trade evident by the density of the willow understory.



Crossing a field, Bartlemas Farm came into view at the top of the rise. Evidence of ruminants was everywhere underfoot and as we approached the farm gate the beasts and their young, which looked like Highland cattle, were avidly tucking into their fodder, an expensive substitute for the shortages caused by this excessively hot summer. Fortunately, they were safely enclosed in their pen as their long horns looked quite daunting.

Turning right out of the farm and following the Pavenham Road out of the village, we soon entered the playing field on the left with its recently constructed village hall. The grass was neatly trimmed but faded, all but for the bright green strip of well-watered ground around the crease. The provision of mobile covers, now drawn back, shows how seriously sport is taken by this village.



Leaving the field by a gate hidden behind the tennis courts and Pavilion, the path skirted a golf course to our left and to our right tall trees obscured the River Great Ouse flowing below. As we walked up a slight incline between brambles, some paused to pick the Juicy blackberries as sustenance on the ascent and others bent in search of long lost golf balls glowing like white mushrooms in the thorny thicket. It would be a case of Russian roulette as the previously hidden path now took us across the fairway in the line of fire of the driven ball. Fortunately, we were well behind the green and paused to applaud a well-placed ball very close to the hole.

Safety finally reached, the exit was as obscurely hidden as its entrance, our leader vanishing from view through an Alice in Wonderland-like rabbit hole in the vegetation. Crossing a minor road, an equally brambly path brought us into open fields with extensive views back to Pavenham Church on the horizon. The moment was right for a rest so we braved the rather frisky breeze to admire the views as we ate bananas, energy bars and the like.



The path now followed the line of a redundant hedge row across fields once golden with corn. A turn downhill between tall hedges to either side was a one hundred yards passageway, finally ending with a kissing gate leading us across two fields to the rear of a house named 'The Retreat' and our exit by the former chapel on to the High Street.

With mindful thought of traffic on this narrow road, after a few yards our leader once again vanished this time down a narrow slit of a path between Derwent Cottages (at one time these were the village Workhouse). The fields we then crossed diagonally were occupied by short shorn sheep and short cropped grass. Passing through a gate at the bottom of the field, we walked alongside the River Ouse again, which could be seen a little more clearly this time through its willow lined banks. Green woodpeckers were yaffling in the trees as we emerged through a shady stinging nettle lined path back onto Mill Lane.

Taking the short walk back to the Cock Inn carpark with its lovely view of the countryside, only Sunday dinner was on our minds.

