

## Old – October 2018

Our Shamblers' October walk was from the White Horse pub in the village of Old. Although a little chilly first thing, the sun shone and the sky was blue with not a cloud in sight. The car park at the rear was small so only the early birds were able to park there. This didn't matter to the 25 walkers who turned up, as adequate parking was found in the adjacent streets.



After the customary ordering of food for our return, our walk leader this week, Finbarr Finn took us to the village green, a few yards away from the pub. Here a description of our walk was delivered beneath the bows of a spreading Lime tree allegedly planted in 1887 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.

Old is a typical small Northampton village with sandstone cottages, grade two listed buildings and an air of tranquility. Its name is derived from the Saxon 'Walda' meaning woodland. It later became 'Wolde', then 'Wold' and finally in the 1930s became known as Old.

Leaving the village punctually at ten thirty, we took the Scaldwell Road for an orderly walk for about 3/4 of a mile. There was little traffic around and we soon turned right into open fields. The rise through fields that had been growing cattle food, was long but gentle. The horizon stood sharp against the bright turquoise sky and those furthest away appeared to drop off what could be the edge of the earth as they passed over the brow. An Oak tree still in leaf next to the leafless bare bones of an Ash silhouetted as if growing out of the rim.



To both sides were views of open countryside as the descent made its way down to what was the village of Faxton. This was not a village lost to plague of the 14<sup>th</sup> century but it continued to thrive until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. At this time Sir Augustine Nichols, an Assizes Judge, resided in the large Manor house. Committing a local man for sheep stealing, a crime punishable by hanging, he came to an unfortunate demise when the sheep stealer's relatives managed to poison his night cap in 1616.

The whole estate was bought in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the Isham family who demolished the Manor house, and so started the decline of the village until the 1960s when Mary Hanford, the last remaining occupant, departed.

The site of the church of Faxton, which was demolished in 1958, was the half way point of our walk. Gathering around the last vestige of the church, a single pillar surrounded as a monument by a metal fence, we took a break and dwelt on the rumour that the ghost of Sir Augustine now haunts the area incensed by the loss of his church.



Quickly moving on across arable fields, dry despite recent rains, we crossed a newly appointed bridge over a stream. A sign on the bridge noted it was only suitable to carry no more than eight persons at a time. It wasn't until we were climbing over the stile out of the next field did we notice the herd of curly haired bovines which had silently crept up on us. They were disappointed that we had no food for them and so a wasted journey had been made.



With the Grade One listed St Andrews Church coming into view we crossed the village playing field supporting a well-groomed cricket pitch and smart village hall. A few young at heart walkers were distracted by the kiddies' swings, but beer and Sunday Roast spurred the majority back to the White Horse.



Unfortunately, a shortage of staff and the size of our group gave us a late meal in spite of us preordering before the walk, but the majority enjoyed the food.