

August 2021 – Maidwell

The morning had been humid with rain a possibility judging by the grey clouds overhead. By 10am the Shamblers had started to assemble in The Stag's car park. The landlord showed us our parking spots, thus allowing room for a vintage car rally arriving for a photo shoot and coffee at 11am.



At last, the sun shone down warmly with four raptors circling overhead; three kites and a buzzard in the blue beyond.

We had a good turnout of 26 for this Sunday morning walk. Those who were staying for lunch after the walk chose their meals from the Stags' extensive menu.

A number of comfortable walks start from The Stag, and our leader, Graeme White, focussed everyone's mind on the walk ahead. Today's began with a short walk along the A508, turning right towards Blueberry Close and then the negotiation of a narrow zigzagging maze-like fence lined path between house.



All passed through the swinging gate at the top, even David. A field of grass and one of corn had newly constructed stiles to climb over. We thought these may be a barrier for David, but his mum put his feet on the top rail and over he went. A downhill path between ornate railings alongside ponds fringed with once yellow flag iris brought our group back on the asphalt road. Someone had gone to a lot of trouble to make the pond very attractive and picturesque.



From now on the gentle incline towards Dale Farm, with its extensive stables, horse boxes and rotating horse exerciser, was easy going. There were a couple of horses in the exerciser which was interesting to watch.



As the summit of Haselbech Hill was approached, views over the Northampton countryside were seen. Here, we stopped to admire the selection of beautiful wildflowers by the side of the crops, no doubt planted purposely. Someone noted the Northampton lighthouse far away in the distance. With the summit reached, the house and grounds of Cotton Manor peeped between ancient trees far, far

away. The house is believed to be the inspiration for Jane Austin's Mansfield Park as she had stayed there previously.



We all commented on how clear the day had become. David couldn't see over the hedge, but then again a Labradoodle had more interesting sights and smells on his mind.



As we gathered for a short break and the group photo, we saw the memorial stone to the last owners of Blueberry Farm, Steve and Jo, beside the stone seat. At that time a lady on horseback came along and stopped for a chat, telling us about this lovely couple and how sad it was that the farm was now up for sale as their son had moved away and did not want to run it.



As we began the steeper descent to Blueberry Farm and Lodge, a stoat scampered across the path behind most of our group so was not seen by many.

We passed by a field of newly planted trees of many varieties, which is lovely to see.



As we arrived at Blueberry Lodge, all was quiet among the outbuildings, not even the neigh of a horse. Suddenly the tranquil air was shattered by the roar of quad and scramble bikes descending down the lane. As if this was not enough of an assault on our senses, they were followed by a monstrous green John Deere

tractor with a 25 ton grain trailer in tow. Farmers have to keep working whilst the weather is good, even on Sundays, to get the harvest home.



Keeping to the road back to Maidwell, without the interruption of a tractor, the Stag's car park was reached and thoughts of food became prominent.



Fortunately, the pub was not too busy so we were able to eat inside and not in the marquee as previously thought, which was a bonus.

