

September 2021 – Kings Cliffe (Evening Walk)

The last evening walk of 2021 was to be from the Cross Keys pub in Kings Cliffe. Not one of Northamptonshire's chocolate box villages but one full of history.

The name "Cliffe" a Saxon word and "Kings" from when the Manor acquired Royal patronage by King William after the Norman Conquest. The densely wooded areas supported hunting for the Royals and fuel and employment for the locals.

Between 1600-1800 wood turning, carving and its production of "treen" was the main industry. The decline came with the advent of aluminium and plastic although the export of locally quarried stone some used in building Cambridge Colleges still went on.



The village lies in the shadow of a large embankment which curves around it to the north. Built to carry the line commissioned by the North Western railway company in 1875, it transported iron ore, Silica clay and passengers. As with the construction of many large projects at this time there were many fatalities and disputes and even a lightning strike which destroyed one of the bridges. On a happier note the line brought employment, prosperity and access to coastal holidays at Yarmouth.



After an interesting introduction to Kings Cliffe by our walk leader, Finbarr, our group of nine took the road out of the village, passing for the first time a bridge over the Willow Brook River before entering fields to the left. A gentle ascent across three fields brought us under the bridge to the imposing now disused railway embankment. The steep climb to the top, which would be slippery with mud in winter, brought us to a narrow densely lined path.



Following this in single file for some way, the track widened and became the local Nature Reserve. Here Nature had been brought under control and managed. Wild flowers were in profusion and the scattering of Elf doors showed an introduction to nature had been made for even the youngest.



Leaving the railway track at the edge of the village, the main street was crossed over to a farm track which took us over the Willow Brook again. Kings Cliffe is blessed with many springs for which it is noted. Feeding the Willow Brook they eventually flow into the River Nene.



The well-defined track now took a route parallel to the Brook which was eventually crossed back into the village over a sturdy bridge. Here overlooking the village green was the Church whose domed spire was commissioned by the Lord of the Manor and the water powered Mill, whose wheel, still intact and could be seen through a window in the wall.



We also passed by the memorial to celebrate the coronation of King Edward VII.

With the evening drawing in the Cross Keys pub was the only destination left. A beer and a portion of chips were very welcome.