

January 2022 – Little Brington

The low winter sun shone brightly down on us in Little Brington as 20 walkers from the Northamptonshire Shamblers gathered in the Saracen's Head car park for the first walk of this New Year 2022. The weather over the rest of Northampton had looked dubious, so it looked like we were blessed.



Gradually our group assembled and by 10.30am, with suitable walking boots donned and Sunday lunches booked, Finbarr Finn, our walk leader, briefed us on the walk and noted that there was not a lot to say about Little Brington, so we set off.



Little Brington is however noted for one thing, having a church with a spire, but no nave. The church of St John was built in the local brownstone by the 4th Earl Spencer in memory of his first wife. By the 1940's the church had fallen into disrepair and a decision was made to demolish it. The Air Ministry appealed for the distinctive tower with an octagonal spire to remain as a local navigational beacon for light aircraft, and it still fulfils this role to the present day.



We left the pub car park and walked a little way through this pretty village before turning right along a side road. Leaving the village through grassy fields we turned down into a well-defined muddy track, once frozen but now melted and churned by the passage of horses, two of which we met.





It seemed quite a long walk along this muddy track by the side of the wood before terra firma was finally reached with views across fields to be appreciated.



The route now joined a farm track where there were quite a few large puddles to negotiate.

We joined a quiet by-road where much stamping of feet released the accumulation of mud from our boots. This was the road to Great Brington and with its gentle rise it took us between Thornburrow Hill on our left and Gawburrow hill on the right.



A footpath sign on our right gave two of our group the chance to shorten their return to Little Brington. We stopped for everyone to catch up and have our refreshment break, and also took the opportunity for a group photograph.





The remaining group continued on for a further half mile to a path across the fields which led back to the outskirts of Great Brington. From here we would have been able to see the residence of the current Earl Spencer, Althorp House, but this would have to be for another day.



With a hedge to our left dividing us from the noisy Brington road, the thought of a Sunday roast in the Saracen's Head spurred tired legs up the moderate slope back into the village. The last path to the road was very well used, so much care had to be taken to avoid slipping over in the mud. This meant that there were plenty of muddy boots to clean before venturing inside the pub.