

April 2022 – Odell

The Shamblers gathered in the car park of the Bell Inn in Odell for the April Sunday walk. The village has existed from well before the 11th century and was known as 'Wadelle' meaning 'the hill where Woad grows' - a plant from the mustard family. This plant was important as a source of indigo blue dye used in the textile industry.



Situated close to the River Ouse, which historically drove the water wheel of Odell Mill, this dog friendly pub was a good starting point for a very enjoyable walk.



The car park at the rear was soon at capacity and overflowing arrivals took advantage of the Village Hall parking nearby. With 22 walkers in tow, Stuart, our walk leader, took us by the diminutive triangle of grass that once hosted a thriving weekly market back in the long distant past.

Following the line of a natural stone wall, our view was obscured of the site where once Odell's 11th Century Mott and Bailey castle had stood. Built on a higher elevation than the rest of the village, it formed an impregnable fortress against invaders.



Crossing the road, we could see the 15th century All Saints Church, which had five bells installed between 1613 and 1638. A gentle grassy ride led us between tall hedges to the boundary of Odell Great Wood.



Here a short stop was made to both see and take in the heady aroma of a host of Bluebells stretching far into the confines of the wood.



Crossing fields to a secret gap in the hedge, we emerged onto Yelnow Lane. The sight and sound of a large wind turbine at the head of the lane was frequently silenced by the roar of engines at the nearby Santa Pod race track.



On entering Odell Great wood, an ancient wood and SSI, the sounds became muted as the single path took us between Oak, Ash, Maple and coppiced Hazel. There was no sign of the Woad plants for which the wood was once famous.



Stopping mid-way for a group photo and snacks, we bid adieu to a small group who had opted for a shorter walk back. The rest continued following the wood perimeter then downhill through fields to reach the outskirts of Harrold village. After crossing the Pavenham Road, we entered Harrold & Odell Country Park.



Here, after gravel extraction ceased in the 1970's, the quarries were flooded with water from the Great Ouse and became the Country Park, which is now popular with dog walkers and birdwatchers alike.

Leaving the Country Park, we could see The Bell in our sight so tired legs sped up with the anticipation of the Sunday lunch which awaited us inside.