

June 2022 – Picnic Walk – Fermyn Woods Country Park

Our Sunday walk this month was at Fermyn Woods Country Park near Brigstock. It is ancient woodland and has a well-established visitor centre and Skylark café, which is particularly popular with families due to its elaborate play area for small children.



The weather for the early part of June had been mixed with sunshine and showers. Due to Father's day falling on our usual third Sunday, our walk had been brought forward by one week. It was a special Sunday for us, being the Shamblers' annual picnic walk.



Fortunately, the morning was graced with a bright blue sky and the winds of the previous day had died down. With the arrival of the 18 walkers and all parking tickets displayed, we set off to do what had been decided would be a shorter walk than usual to allow time for the picnic at the end.

Looking with envy at the equipment that today's children have, as opposed to a single swing of our childhood, our walking group snaked by and entered the wood by one of the three well defined paths.



The habitat is varied, some quite dense forest with its muddy corners and secret ponds, to more open water that was once gravel pits upon which now danced and skimmed the common Hawker Dragonfly and delicate Demoiselle. Fishing is allowed for carp and roach, but our minds were on the ascending gradient taking us into the depths of the wood.

The path gradually narrowed and all fell into single file. Eventually the summit was reached with views into open country side. Taking advantage of the views, to our right the path gently skirted downhill to return back to our departure point.



Other than the calls of wrens and chiffchaff, and a lonely kite overhead, we had not experienced the plethora of wildlife which abounds in the forest. On a hot sunny day in July the Purple Emperor Butterfly can be found sipping from a forest puddle or the Silver washed Fritillary dancing on the bramble blooms, but now our thoughts were on the provisions which formed our picnic lunch.

The handy wooden benches and tables were soon commandeered, blankets laid out on the grass and surrounded by fold-out chairs by those who had brought

them. With the gentle chatter of conversation, broken only by the popping of sandwich boxes and slurping of tea cups, the picnic began.

The walk had been no more than three miles, but this social finale provided a most enjoyable end to our Picnic Walk.

