

Oakley Ramblers Club



Affiliated to HF Holidays Limited

On Saturday 24th March ten members started the first leg of the clubs latest Long Distance project, the Avon Valley Path. Jonathan writes:

“This is the 34 mile trail from Salisbury to Christchurch. The first section which is 8 miles runs from Salisbury to Downton. We drove to Downton where we boarded the bus back to Salisbury, a good service running every 30 minutes. The bus stop is strategically places opposite “The Bull” so having missed a bus we could have a coffee while we waited for the next one. The bus dropped us off by Cathedral Close where the walk commences. We then passed through Harnham and started climbing out of Salisbury, looking back towards the city with its fine views of the Cathedral. As we entered the open country, given the recent wet weather, it was not surprisingly a little soggy and as we approached the River Ebble careful tussock hopping was required to avoid wet feet. On reaching Oddstock we were revived with some excellent sandwiches at the Yew Tree. Our route then took us along the farm trails past Nunton and back over the A338 to reach the village of Charlton-All-Saints and from there back to Downton.

The weather Gods smiled on us as while there was a smattering of rain occasionally on the car journey to and from Downton we completed the walk in the dry.

The next stage will be from Downton to Fordingbridge and is scheduled for the forthcoming 19th May.”

On Wednesday, led by Sandy and Veronica, six stalwart ORC members (including 3 committee members) defied the weather and set out on a 5 miles walk starting and ending at The Watership Down Inn at Free Folk. Sandie writes:



“We met up at the school layby in Oakley, hoping the rain would stop, and arrived at the Watership Down. With wet gear on we set off heading eastwards along the road and crossing it took a south easterly direction up the hillside opposite. Following a path roughly parallel with the River Test we could see Bere Mill, an old Saxon building on the river, which Henri Portal had used as his first mill to make paper. Ravaged by fire in February this year it was clear that restoration has already begun.

This part of the walk goes through softly undulating fields and woodlands with good views but we didn't see the bull which we had been warned about by posters near the buildings at the start of the walk. We did see some flocks of brown and white sheep



standing “To Attention” with their backs turned against the wind and rain. I wonder how they all learn to face in exactly the same direction without any tapes or measures!

The footpath continued toward Whitchurch, meeting the B3400 from the junction with Old Town Mill Lane and continues downhill into the small town centre. By this time we were resigned to the fact that the rain wasn't going to stop so the sight of a small coffee shop was very tempting. We were made very welcome by the staff, in spite of our muddy boots and wet clothes and we felt much warmer after our tea, coffee and cakes and ready to start climbing the steep hill to the edge of the town. By cutting across country and under the railway line we eventually met the Harrow Way and from there back to the Watership Down where we had lunch.”