

# Oakley Ramblers Club



Affiliated to HF Holidays Limited

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On Friday 18 May nine members walked the second leg of the club's latest Long Distance project the Avon Valley Path. This is a 34 mile long trail from Salisbury to Christchurch. The second section which is 7.5 miles runs from Downton to Fordingbridge.



We drove to Downton where we sustained ourselves with coffee and other goodies from the Borough Cafe whose flapjacks are excellent.

As we reached the outskirts of Downton we came to Downton Moot. Created in the early 18th century out of the ruins of a substantial 12th century

earthwork castle, set in 8 acres and bordering the River Avon, these delightful gardens were well worth a brief visit.

We then climbed up a slight hill and looking back could see the spire of Salisbury Cathedral. To our front and across the river we could see Breamore House.

After passing through fields we joined the road at North Charford and passed Hatchet green where a large number of ponies were grazing.

Next to our left was the start of a Long Avenue of Limes leading to Hale Park which was built around 1715. It is not open to the public but we found the Church of St Mary in the grounds to be open and very interesting as were the two swarms of bees which had taken up residence.



We stopped for lunch at the Horse and Groom at Woodgreen and on leaving Woodgreen we climbed Castle Hill to walk along the escarpment from which there are fine views of the Avon and beyond.

We descended to cross the water meadows and then crossed the Avon by a suspension bridge made of reused parts of a Bailey bridge erected in 1949-50. Our arrival in Fordingbridge was well timed as we only had 5 minutes to wait for the bus to take us back to Downton.

We were blessed with a pleasant sunny day.