

Oakley Ramblers Club



Affiliated to HF Holidays Limited

The first of this year's evening walks led by Carolyn took place on Wednesday 6th June. After meeting at the Basingstoke Canal car park in Odiham nine members and one dog set off along the Basingstoke Canal towpath. Opened in 1794 the canal was a commercial link between London and Hampshire and at 37 miles long was the longest canal in southern England. The coming of the railways saw its decline but following a period of restoration was reopened as a leisure amenity in 1991. It is now known for its rich wildlife of birds, butterflies and dragonflies that can be seen along its banks.

After passing a lifting bridge we stopped to view the ruins of Odiham Castle (or King John's Castle). The castle was built in 1212 and used by King John as a resting place between Windsor and Winchester. The Castle is now cared for by Hampshire County Council who have placed in its grounds many interesting information boards detailing the history of the Castle.

Continuing along the towpath we came to the disused Greywell Tunnel which is now home to over 12,500 bats including Natterer's and Daubenton's. Unfortunately it was too early in the evening for us to see the spectacular sight of them leaving to feed which normally happens at dusk.

From the tunnel we took the path into the village of Greywell. Walking through the lynch gate of St. Mary's Church we crossed through a field of cows which obliged us by staying in the furthest corner and then entered the Greywell Moors Nature Reserve. Here we saw a memorial to the eminent botanist E C Wallace, negotiated more cows and then walked on through several fields of cereal crops to the outskirts of Odiham.

At this point we should have walked through another field of cows to the rear of Robert Mays School but only one brave soul ventured through and on regrouping we headed along West Street which has many quaint cottages, down Odiham High Street and back to the car park. As the evening was still warm five ramblers decided to stop at the Water Witch pub for refreshments.

On Saturday 16th June Peter & Pauline led eight ramblers along the Basing Trail. We



set off from Bartons Mill walking a short distance along the River Loddon enjoying views of the unique railway arches and the old tythe barn. Our walk then took us via Redbridge Lane, the edge of the common and across marsh land to the underpass into Eastrop Park. We walked through the park and enjoyed watching the

ducklings & swans swimming on the ponds before heading up Eastrop Lane into the Memorial Park. Our route then took us through the park, across the Old Common Road via Blackdam Ponds to Crabtree Plantation. We stopped at the top of the hill for a short rest and to admire the views across Basingstoke.

Our route then took us through the woods to the Bolton Archway carpark, across the A30 through the Old Common into Old Basing where we were pleasantly surprised to find the village were holding a scarecrow festival. We all had fun spotting some of the more unusual scarecrows. On reaching the Church it was decided to take the short cut back to Bartons Mill where many of us enjoyed some very welcome refreshments.

