

Oakley Ramblers Club



Affiliated to HF Holidays Limited

On Sunday 17th February Sandy lead the walk based on the village of Facombe in the North Hampshire Downs, an area which it appears we had not visited before. Sandy writes “Nestled between Newbury to the north and Andover to the south, the area must be one of the few where you can enjoy the peace and quiet of the surroundings without any noise.

Thirteen walkers plus one pooch set out on this 6.5 mile walk on a nice brisk winter's morning. The circular walk started from Facombe via Ashmansworth (770feet) and over Pilot Hill (937); using the Wayfarers Way and then on to the Brenda Parker Way. The Brenda Parker Way is a 78 mile way running between Aldershot and Andover, designed to take in various places of interest and beauty spots on the way. The guide time recommended a minimum of 3 hours to complete the circuit and so this proved. It had rained the day before so the going was a bit muddy in parts but not overly so. The route followed ridge tracks, field paths and some very quiet country roads. Poles has been advised and proved useful in the up and down nature of the terrain.

It was a slightly more strenuous and varied trip than some of our walks with good all-round views over rolling hills dotted with ancient woodlands, hidden combes and seemingly unchanging isolated communities. Facombe itself is the most northerly village in the county and is a good example of an unspoilt estate village centred on its local pub the “Jack Russel”, now very upmarket following a recent make over.

From Facombe we made our way toward Ashmanworth over rolling fields and little hidden combes until we hit the style at Steel's Farm just outside Ashmansworth, where we were confronted by a giant made out of old telegraph poles! We had fun getting over this but safely made our way through the old village with its long defunct pub the George and its unspoilt 12th century church with medieval wall-paintings and memorial to the composer Gerald Finzi. We then followed a quiet road for a short distance until we turned off on the well-used Wayfarers Way track. Though the



weather had deteriorated after a promising start there were still superb views out over Berkshire as we followed an ancient ridge track in the direction of Pilot Hill where we picked up the Brenda Parker Way. Another hour of up and down combes eventually brought us back to a very busy Jack Russel pub and a late lunch which was generally regarded as pretty good if

not better. But stars of the walk were without doubt "Buddy "the black retriever and the 11 year old granddaughter of one of our members who lead from the front from start to finish, perhaps putting a dent in the fable of the tortoise and the hare!"

Our AGM was held on 11th February at St Leonard's Centre with twenty two members attending. During the business of the meeting it was reported that the club had enjoyed another successful year. All the current officers agreed to continue for the next year and one new committee member was voted in. Following this all present enjoyed the cheese and wine refreshments.