

Oakley Ramblers Club



Affiliated to HF Holidays Limited

Due to unforeseen circumstances our planned walk for Friday 5th April had to be changed at short notice to the following day. So, on the Saturday morning six walkers gathered at the School lay-by on Oakley Lane and set off at a brisk pace along the footpath that runs behind the school.

After crossing the B3400, we headed up Malshanger Lane and were passed by only two vehicles before reaching the lodge at the bottom of the drive that leads up to Malshanger House. Continuing uphill along the drive, we paused several times to



admire the beautiful primroses, three trees with very unusual peeling bark, a small herd of alpacas in one of the fields bordering the drive and the Victorian post box set into the wall behind Malshanger House.

We then skirted a field planted with wheat and cut through between the buildings of Sheardown Farm and followed a track which led us through woods and eventually uphill to a stile. Here we stopped briefly for a little refreshment and then continued on the well-marked path bordering Tangier Park. In the field in front of Tangier House we enjoyed watching a herd of ewes, some with very new born lambs. We were amused to witness the drama of one tiny black lamb careering at great speed away from the herd and then

bleating for its mum when it realised it had become lost and separated from the rest. Thankfully the shepherd was on hand and eventually all were happily reunited.

Our walk then took us gently downhill and through part of the Manydown estate where we could see the church of Wootton St. Lawrence across the fields in the distance. The track eventually emerged back onto the B3400 from where two of our group then walked back towards the village. The rest of us continued across fields to Pack Lane and crossed the railway lines to join the multi-user path back into the village having completed our 6 mile walk just in time for a well-deserved lunch.

The following Saturday we ventured further afield to Horsebridge, not far from Stockbridge. Eight of us drove from the village and were met by two others at our starting point, the John O' Gaunt Inn at Horsebridge.

After the important business of placing our orders for lunch at the pub, eight of us set off following the route of the former Roman Road which ran between Winchester and

Old Sarum while two others decided to follow a gentler route along the Test Valley Way.

It was a bright and sunny morning with a gentle breeze, ideal conditions for walking and after a short climb the view soon opened out and we enjoyed far reaching views across the beautiful Test Valley countryside.



After a short while our route took us past an extensive vineyard where workers were busy pruning the vines. We continued along the track pausing to admire the bluebells which were just beginning to bloom, until we came to a small memorial stone placed to commemorate four German airmen who were shot down near the spot in 1940.

We then joined the Clarendon Way, passing through a wood and beside fields with grazing horses, gallops and some fences and hazards designed for a cross country horse trials course. We enjoyed a brief stop for some refreshments before the route took us down to the picturesque village of King's Somborne with its stream and thatched cottages. Outside the church we

passed the impressive War Memorial which was designed by Edward Lutyens, who also designed the Cenotaph in London. Leaving the village, we re-joined the Clarendon Way which climbed up out of the valley and rewarded us with great views of where we had walked.

The final leg of our walk was pleasantly shaded and easy flat walking along the course of the former Test Valley Railway which was known as the Sprat and Winkle Line. This section of the walk followed two long distance paths, the Test Valley Way and the Monarch's Way. Finally, after our 6 mile walk, we crossed the River Test with a view of the former water-powered corn mill and arrived back at the John O' Gaunt more than ready for a drink, lunch and a sit down!