

Oakley Ramblers Club



Affiliated to HF Holidays Limited

The 2nd April 2017 saw completion of our walking the Kennet & Avon Canal path when nine ramblers arrived in Bristol having walked 20 miles from Bath over the previous two days. The canal stretches some 87 miles from Reading to Bristol and the club has been walking sections of it starting in June 2014 and at intervals since then.

The earlier section walks were led by Richard and Heather who, unfortunately, couldn't make this last weekend, and later sections by Pauline and Chris. The award for the most consistent walker has to go to Pauline Shead being the only one of us who completed the whole distance from Reading to Bristol.

The Kennet & Avon Canal is in fact three historic waterways, the Kennet Navigation, the Avon Navigation and the Kennet & Avon Canal. The River Kennet was made navigable from Reading to Newbury in 1724 and by 1727 boats could reach Bath. The waterway was never prosperous and eventually, after a century of decline, fell into disrepair in the 1960s. However, the Kennet & Avon Trust was set up by water enthusiasts and volunteers who restored the canal to the level it enjoys now.

Examples of their work can be seen in the restoration of the still working Boulton & Watt steam engine at Crofton originally installed in 1812 to pump the water to the

high level and the flight of locks at Caen.

This last section of the club walk was led by Jonathan & Enid and having set our base at the Premier Inn in Hengrove on the edge of Bristol on Friday evening we travelled by bus back to Bath on Saturday for the first day's walking.



Dragon boats

Leaving Bath we saw many types of activities on the canal including rowers, barges and Dragon boat crews enthusiastically training as the towpath took us past the Kelston and Saltford locks before arriving at the Bird in Hand, Saltford for lunch.

Brassware was made at the nearby Saltford Brass Mill from about 1750 until 1925 and it remains the only survivor of 30 mills on this part of the canal. It also retains the only annealing furnace of its type in England.



Saltford Weir

Eels are also prevalent in this part of the river a long way from their breeding grounds in the Sargasso Sea in the Caribbean but providing food more the numerous herons we saw.

Continuing on we arrived at Keynsham after about 10.5 miles where we took the bus back to our base in Bristol.

On Sunday morning we drove back to Keynsham and parked up. Keynsham spelt "K..E..Y..N" for those who remember Radio Luxembourg.



Re-joining the canal path on a beautiful morning we continued on the route to Bristol, passing the former Fry's Chocolate factory in Keynsham now being converted into a retirement village. We passed the Hanham lock where the river has worn its way down to create the spectacular Hanham Gorge through which we were walking.

Leaving Keynsham



Looking towards Hanham Lock

As we made our way on the towpath the wildlife was again abundant with ducks, ducklings, swans, cormorants on the water and herons nesting high in the trees.

Eventually we arrived on the outskirts of Bristol where the scenery changed as we had to leave the waterside and walk through the streets into the centre of the city to complete what was a very enjoyable ramble.



A happy group of Ramblers