

Wychwood Walk with the Shipton WI Minster Lovell: Windrush, Ruins and a Dovecote

Five stalwarts did this walk on 8th April despite a dismal weather forecast. As it turned out we remained dry and warm under our layers of fleece. You can start this walk at the church where there is room



for 2 or 3 cars only. Go back down the road you have just driven up, taking time to admire the cottages and their gardens. At The Swan turn left to walk along the raised path and left again into the field, cross diagonally to the gate, go through this and make for the church, you are now almost back where you started! We saw flags in the grounds of a house next to the church; were they just decoration or perhaps Buddhist prayer flags, as suggested by their colouring? The walk continues through the churchyard, which, just after Easter, was looking very colourful with fresh flowers on most of the graves.

Minster Lovell Ruins

This takes you to the ruins which are well worth a look, information boards give you a good idea as to what the hall must have looked like, amazing to think it was deserted and left to fall into ruin when the family moved to another estate in Norfolk. As you walk towards the river there are several hollows, which were once fish ponds supplying the hall. As you approach the edge of the field a board reminds you that you are in the Upper Thames tributary region and in an

Environmentally Sensitive Area. We looked for fritillaries but it was either too cold or we weren't sharp-eyed enough. We continued on the far side of the river over a metal bridge, just following the waymark signs until

the path began to rise through woodland. This bit was steep and muddy but we all stayed vertical! Once out of the woodland we crossed a narrow field from which we could clearly see the spire of St Mary's Church in Witney. Rather than take a footpath across a recently ploughed field, we plumped for the bridleway which led us to a new stile. On the far side of this we were rewarded by seeing lots of deer footprints.

Make Mine a Cappuccino!

We were looking forward to dropping in at The Lamb which was just a right turn away when we met the Crawley Road. Pat's was going to be a cappuccino, Di's an Americano...well that was all thwarted when we found the door locked. We simply had to carry on along the track! Eventually this merged into a field path and we could see Minster Lovell church a couple of fields away - the route back was either a return to the dovecote or a cut across to a gateway leading onto a quiet road.

Rosemary Wilson

If you would like to join us for our summer programme of walks email roswilson@btopenworld.com