

# Kings Bromley Parish Boundary Walk

Saturday 21st September 2024

Many people were looking forward to the Boundary Walk, the fifth of the 'modern era', organised by Kings Bromley Historians on 21st September. As usual, local landowners were contacted to give permission to cross their land, as well as HS2, and Heidelberg who now own the quarry. A couple of meetings were held beforehand, so that the walk leaders of the four sections could discuss the route and any problems arising. All walkers signed disclaimers on the day for each section.



## Section 1: Yoxall Bridge (A515) to Chads Nature Reserve (Rugeley Road A513)

**Section Leaders:** Margaret Smith, aided by Dennis and Lynne O'Dea, Ann Hoar, Allan and Alison Howard

**Walkers:** Margaret Smith, Alison Howard, Allan Howard, Ann Hoar, Dennis O'Dea, Lynne O'Dea, Paul Till, Judith Till, Helen Whalley, Dave Bromley, Jenny Bray-Cotton, Jo Berriman, Howard Price, Alan Wray, Sarah Armstrong, Laura Kendall, Amber Kendall, Colin Davies, Alan Grimmett, Heather Grimmett, Di Swift, Bethany Panayi, Sarah Burrow, Becky Parker, Keith Hollins, Teresa McCullagh

26 walkers met at Yoxall Bridge at 8.45am. The weather was overcast but warm; however, there was some concern about the weather forecast for rain and thunderstorms later in the day. After a short introduction from Margaret Smith, we walked down from the bridge to a tricky opening to the walk: descent to a ditch, climb up using the rope provided by Margaret to quite a high fence. Everyone negotiated these difficulties well and then the walking became more straightforward, with lovely views of the river as we walked along.

As we walked towards the sailing club lake and then along the bund by the lake on Saddlesall, the walking became more difficult and there was evidence of the work undertaken in advance by Margaret, Ann Hoar, the O'Deas and the Howards to beat down the vegetation (particularly Himalayan Balsam) to make a passable path towards the side of the river. We all

agreed that it was wonderful to have the opportunity to see the lakes, parts of the river and the local countryside, usually closed to the public. Hopes were expressed that at some stage in the future, this area could be made available to the residents of Kings Bromley.

Towards the end of this section, we reached the New Trent, which all the walkers had to cross. Luckily, the river level was low enough to make it safe to cross in wellingtons/spare trainers or with plastic bags over their shoes. Then it was the easy bit, following a public footpath down to the Rugeley Road; everyone walked along the left-hand verge of the A513, arriving at CHADS at 10.35am where teas, coffees and biscuits had very kindly been laid on for the group. Toilets were also available for the walkers to use. Donations were made by walkers to CHADS, together with a donation from Kings Bromley Historians.

Judith and Paul Till and Teresa McCulloch left the walk here. People took the opportunity to divest themselves of their wellingtons which were taken away by Graham Swift and Nick Hoar in their cars.

## **Section 2: CHADS Nature Reserve to Wood End Lane/Fullbrook Farm**

**Section Leaders:** Lynne and Dennis O'Dea, Ann Hoar

**Walkers:** Lynne O'Dea, Dennis O'Dea, Ann Hoar, Margaret Smith, Alison Howard, Allan Howard, Helen Whalley, Dave Bromley, Jenny Bray-Cotton, Jo Berriman, Howard Price, Alan Wray, Sarah Armstrong, Laura Kendall, Amber Kendall, Colin Davies, Alan Grimmett, Heather Grimmett, Di Swift, Bethany Panayi, Sarah Burrow, Becky Parker, Keith Hollins

At CHADS Allan gave a brief talk on some of the history of the first two sections, saying that the New Trent had been cut in order to supply sufficient water to run the mill at Kings Bromley. He talked about the Manor having been built on the proceeds from the sugar plantation in Barbados; the only extant parts of the Manor still to be seen were the water tower and the wall, the latter built with compensation money (given to the slave owners) from the emancipation of slaves on the plantation. Regarding the next section, Allan mentioned the problems with HS2 works which have affected the whole area, including CHADS and local farmers.

The group set off at 11am, along the public footpath leading to Glebe Farm and towards Handsacre, walking past Tuppenhurst Farm on to Tuppenhurst Lane. At this stage we had to avoid HS2 works by walking through a field of sweetcorn. This was enjoyed by some more than others, as the maize was quite densely planted and high, so it was easy to lose sight of the rest of the group. We were then able to pass through the tunnel underneath the railway and made our way to the road.

We walked carefully up the B5014, past the Sweet Chestnut tree (no children in the group to pass through the branches) at Hanch Hall, and the waterworks and bottled water plant at Seedy Mill to the A515. After turning left on the main road, we reached Wood End Lane and walked to the junction with Elmhurst Crossing Lane, arriving around 1pm.

Here Jo Berriman and Howard Price, together with Margaret Smith, left the walk. Sue Hollins was delivered to the meeting place by Nick Hoar to join her husband for the remainder of the walk. Lindsey Davies joined the walk here. It had been decided not to have lunch at this point, as it was not the most scenic of places to sit down, so after a brief stop the group continued to Fullbrook Farm.

### **Section 3: Wood End Lane to Lupin Farm**

**Section Leaders:** Allan and Alison Howard

**Walkers:** Lynne O'Dea, Dennis O'Dea, Ann Hoar, Alison Howard, Allan Howard, Helen Whalley, Dave Bromley, Jenny Bray-Cotton, Alan Wray, Sarah Armstrong, Laura Kendall, Amber Kendall, Lindsey Davies, Alan Grimmett, Heather Grimmett, Di Swift, Bethany Panayi, Sarah Burrow, Becky Parker, Keith Hollins, Sue Hollins

The group walked carefully in single file along Wood End Lane, turning right after the bungalow up the public footpath to Fullbrook Farm. Here we were welcomed by Edward and Sarah Baskerville, who had very kindly put chairs out in the garden and offered teas, coffees and biscuits to everyone who sat down in the sunshine to have lunch.

Allan talked about the history of the Kings Bromley boundary walks, the isolation hospital which used to be situated in the next section of the walk (and Sarah Baskerville knew someone who had been in the hospital as a child) and further problems with HS2 encountered in this next section. Alison Howard mentioned the reasons for the importance of the parish boundary: in the days before benefit payments and Social Security, the Poor Law specified that the Parish was financially responsible for the poor living there, so each parish wanted to ensure that the boundary was marked and maintained so that they did not have to take responsibility for poor people who had not been born there.

At this point, Colin Davies left the walk to take over responsibility for his dog at home. Having availed themselves of the toilet facilities provided at the farm, the group walked down the long drive to Watery Lane, near to Curborough Craft Centre, and crossed over the road into fields next to the sewage works. This brought us back to Wood End Lane, through the Thomsons' farm, where we crossed the road. HS2 works prevented the walkers from walking down to Wood End Lock, so the group turned right along the road to the footpath taking a meandering route between HS2 fencing down to the canal. The group then turned right along the canal to Shade End Lock. After crossing the canal, the walkers turned right to Fradley Junction, causing some interest amongst the many people sitting outside The Swan in the sunshine, who thought it was a sponsored walk and offered to contribute to the charity funds!

Turning left after the pub along the public footpath past the nature reserve, the group meandered down through the woodland and then through a field full of very tall miscanthus, used as biomass for power stations. However, Amber (our youngest walker) could not resist the thought of an ice-cream, so she and her mum had crossed back over the canal to get one at the Laughing Duck café. Lynne and Ann waited for them by the canal and then followed the group along the path to Alrewas Hayes, where an Indian wedding was taking place. Following the footpaths beyond, we came within sight of Lupin Farm, arriving around 3.30pm.

### **Section 4: Lupin Farm to Yoxall Bridge**

**Section Leaders:** Kev and Helen Price

**Walkers:** Kev Price, Helen Price, Lynne O'Dea, Dennis O'Dea, Ann Hoar, Alison Howard, Allan Howard, Helen Whalley, Dave Bromley, Jenny Bray-Cotton, Alan Wray, Sarah Armstrong, Laura Kendall, Amber Kendall, Lindsey Davies, Alan Grimmett, Heather Grimmett, Di Swift, Bethany Panayi, Sarah Burrow, Becky Parker, Keith Hollins, Sue Hollins

We received a very warm welcome from Edwin Tipper at Lupin Farm who had set out chairs in the barn, together with teas, coffees and biscuits. Again, toilets were made available. Helen and Kev joined us as walk leaders for the last section. There had already been some rumblings of thunder, but the sky was becoming increasingly dark and menacing and, as we were preparing to move on to the next section at 4pm, it started to rain heavily.

The group crossed the road to the stile and made their way towards Orgreave, following the footpath through the abandoned farmyard and down towards the R Trent. The weather was atrocious, with heavy rain, thunder and lightning. At one point there was a lovely rainbow, and everyone hoped that this marked the end of the rain, but the storm swept round again with increasing ferocity. However, no-one gave up and we all trudged through mud and rain, arriving at Yoxall Bridge at 5pm, extremely wet but very pleased to have completed the section and finished the walk.

30 people had walked at least one section of the Bounday Walk, with 19 completing all 4 sections (Alan Wray's Apple watch calculated the full walk to be 13 miles, not including the walk from the village to Yoxall Bridge and back). A group photo was taken, everyone congratulated themselves and each other on their achievement and then made their way home, by car or foot, having completed the boundary walk of the parish.

On Sunday evening at 8pm, everyone was welcomed to the Howards' house for drinks and nibbles. All were very pleased to receive a certificate, with their name inscribed by Eileen Day, marking their participation in the walk. Eileen had brought along an album of photos from the 1984 boundary walk.

Many thanks to all who participated and to the walk leaders; the providers of refreshments and rest stops; the people providing transport for walkers and wellingtons (Nick Hoar and Graham Swift); the Parish Council who arranged the certificates, so nicely produced by Lindsey Davies; the landowners who allowed us to cross their land. A special mention must go to Alan Grimmett, the most senior walker, who walked all four sections in wellies. A most successful and enjoyable day, despite everyone looking rather wet at the end!

