

Kings Bromley Parish Boundary Walk

20th September 2014

Many people were looking forward to the next Boundary Walk, the fourth of the 'modern era'. The Kings Bromley Historians decided to organise the walk to be held on the 20th September; as usual, local landowners were contacted to give permission to cross their land. A couple of meetings were held beforehand, in order for the walk leaders of the four sections to discuss the route and any problems arising. Hansons, who own the quarry/lake area of the walk, asked for a risk assessment to be completed. The owners of Wood End Lock Cottage, next to the canal, had always welcomed the walkers very warmly in the past, but had sold their cottage to HS2 as the planned railway would pass right over their property; new tenants had not yet moved into the cottage so it was hoped that the group would be able to walk past on to the canal on the day.

All walkers signed disclaimers on the day for each section.

Section 1: Yoxall Bridge to CHADS Nature Reserve (Rugeley Road A513)

Section Leaders: Jonathan and Margaret Nason

Walkers: Alison Howard, Allan Howard, Roger Price, Peter White, Charles Jarman, Tracey Boulton, Martin Parker, Bella Husbands, Barry Cooke, Ian Beckett, Sue Beckett, Mike Dunning, Cynthia Dunning, Bill Husbands, Kathleen Footé, Gareth Brentnall, Carol Brentnall, Stuart Holland, Olwen Holland, Indie the dog, Ann Hoar, Dennis O'Dea, Lynne O'Dea, Derek Silverwood, James Edgerton, Edward Baskerville.

27 walkers and Olwen's dog, Indie, met at Yoxall Bridge at 8.45am. Jonathan suggested that everyone descend to the old bridge so that we could all start on the old village boundary along the middle of the river. It was a pleasure to welcome Derek Silverwood and James Edgerton from CHADS, who planned to walk along to the Nature Reserve with the group, together with Edward Baskerville whose farm we would be passing through later on the walk and also Kathleen Footé from Kirkby-in-Ashfield who had been told about the walk by Keith Day when she and her mother happened to be walking in Kings Bromley a few weeks before. Lynne O'Dea had her wrist in plaster after a recent fall, but was gamely hoping to complete the full walk.

The weather was overcast but warm; it had been a particularly dry September this year. We were seen off by Historians and partners/friends of the walkers.

We walked back up on to the road and down the A515 for a short way before crossing over into the fields and walking alongside the river. There were a number of gates to negotiate along the way, which was particularly difficult for Lynne with her arm in plaster, but she managed very well, with help from Dennis. Margaret Nason was rather concerned about the cows in the fields, but took comfort in the knowledge that one of the group, Stuart Holland, was a vet and would be able to save her from any bovine attacks. There were lovely views of the river as we walked along. At one point, Allan talked to the group about the reasons for the importance of the parish boundary; at one time, 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 definitely marked and maintained so that they did not have to take responsibility for poor people living in a neighbouring parish.

We crossed over the bridge and walked towards the sailing club lake. Jonathan had to telephone Hansons as we entered their land and let them know when we were leaving it. We

walked along the ridge between the lake at Saddlesall and the river, a very scenic route. Roger Price was particularly interested in showing those walking alongside him the confluence of the R. Blythe and the R. Trent; we all agreed that it was wonderful to have the opportunity to see parts of the river and the local countryside usually closed to the public. There were views of Nethertown across the river - so near, yet so far to travel by road. Luckily, Jonathan and Roger Price had beaten down some of the vegetation along some of this stretch, to make it easier for people to make their way.

Towards the end of this section, we reached the New Trent; ten years ago some people had crossed using the girder and some had sat in a dinghy which Allan had towed across the river. However, this year the early inspection visits had revealed that part of the girder had fallen down and it only reached half way across the river. Jonathan and Margaret decided that, due to the very dry weather, the river was safe to cross in wellingtons (and the dinghy would not have floated in the amount of water present). Some of the group had carried wellingtons with them, some crossed in bare feet and some put plastic bags over their shoes; whatever the method used, everyone crossed safely to the other side. Now it was the easy bit, following a public footpath down to the Rugeley Road. By now, a rather dampening drizzle was falling, so everyone was pleased to walk along the road to arrive at CHADS at 10.30am where teas, coffees and biscuits had been laid on for the group.

Section 2: CHADS Nature Reserve to Wood End Lane

Section Leaders: Lynne and Dennis O'Dea

Walkers: Alison Howard, Allan Howard, Roger Price, Peter White, Charles Jarman, Tracey Boulton, Martin Parker, Bella Husbands, Barry Cooke, Ian Beckett, Sue Beckett, Bill Husbands, Kathleen Footé, Gareth Brentnall, Carol Brentnall, Stuart Holland, Olwen Holland, Indie the dog, Ann Hoar, Dennis O'Dea, Lynne O'Dea, Edward Baskerville, Ann Bowns, Paul Bowns.

It was very pleasant to sit at CHADS and enjoy the refreshments. There were also toilets there which came in very handy. We were joined by Dorothy Deakin, Ken and Jane Bowcock, Eileen and Keith Day from the Historians and Norma Cooke. Derek and James from CHADS left the walk here, but everyone thanked CHADS for their very welcome refreshments. Again, HS2 reared its ugly head, as Derek talked about the problems the proposed railway line would cause them. Cynthia and Mike Dunning also left the walk here. People took the opportunity to divest themselves of their wellingtons which were taken away by the Historians in their cars. The group set off at 11am, joined just in time by Ann and Paul Bowns, along the public footpath leading to Glebe Farm and towards Handsacre. The group walked past Tuppenhurst Farm on to Tuppenhurst Lane, then took a public footpath which led alongside the railway line. We were surprised to see a steam train, the Union of South Africa, coming along the line and thought perhaps it had been laid on specially for us. Lynne then warned us that we were approaching a tunnel which would take us under the railway line and that she and Dennis had seen evidence of rats, so it was best to ensure the dogs were kept to heel. Everyone was slightly unnerved by the idea of the rats in the tunnel and Allan wondered if he should tie up the bottom of his trousers with string. However, the tunnel was negotiated without incident and we then found ourselves in fields of bushes covered with very tempting large raspberries; there were a number of workers picking the fruit to send off to the supermarkets. We walked up to 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. It is always surprising, when walking, to experience the speed of passing traffic. After

turning left on the main road we reached Wood End Lane and walked to the junction with Elmhurst Crossing Lane to our lunch stop at 12.25.

Section 3: Wood End Lane to Lupin Farm

Section Leaders: Allan and Alison Howard

Walkers: Alison Howard, Allan Howard, Charles Jarman, Tracey Boulton, Martin Parker, Bella Husbands, Barry Cooke, Ian Beckett, Sue Beckett, Bill Husbands, Kathleen Footé, Gareth Brentnall, Carol Brentnall, Stuart Holland, Olwen Holland, Indie the dog, Ann Hoar, Dennis O'Dea, Lynne O'Dea, Edward Baskerville, Ann Bowns, Paul Bowns

Everyone was very pleased to see the Historians, Dorothy, Ken, Jane and Eileen, who had come along to provide teas and coffees. We settled down to our picnic lunches on the slightly damp grass; however, the weather was now fine and it was good to chat about the walk so far. It turned out that both Roger Price and Charles Jarman were celebrating 50th wedding anniversaries, having been married (not to each other, obviously!) the day before, 50 years previously. Roger and his friend Peter now left the group as Roger had a family celebration to attend.

The group set off at 1pm, walking along Wood End Lane and hoping that cars would take a wide berth. We turned right along the public footpath next to the bungalow belonging to the Baskerville family, over the fields to Edward Baskerville's farm, Fullbrook Farm and his campsite. The ladies were relieved to be offered the chance to use the toilets. Edward had thought he might leave the walk here but was enjoying himself so much he decided to continue. We 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. Allan talked to the group about the two isolation hospitals here: one at Wood End Farm for diphtheria and other infectious diseases and another smallpox isolation hospital built later in the field we were passing through. Edward Baskerville mentioned that he knew people who had been treated there. We walked around the field to Wood End Farm where Mary Tomlinson came out to say hello. This brought us back to Wood End Lane, where we crossed the road to go down the lane to Wood End Lock Cottage. Luckily, the new tenants had not yet taken over the property, so we were able to pass by the cottage and over the canal bridge. An article had appeared recently in the Lichfield Mercury about a visit of the HS2 committee, with a photo of them with the local MP Michael Fabricant at Wood End Lock looking at the effects of the railway line on the local area.

Jonathan stopped to chat to a narrow boat owner who had come from Llangollen, while the rest of us continued along the tow path. We turned left through a gap in the hedge into an enormous field. Luckily the crop had been taken off the field, but it was still quite difficult to walk on. However, the sun came out and it was nice to move around the group of walkers, talking to different people as we went along. We could see the marquee of Alrewas Hayes, now doing a roaring trade as a wedding venue, and the biomass production plant nearby. With a sigh of relief, we eventually got on to an easier footpath and could see Common Lane Farm. We turned right on to a farm track and then took a footpath across the field on to the A513 near Lupin Farm, arriving around 3.15pm. It had been a long section but we arrived earlier than expected.

Section 4: Lupin Farm to Yoxall Bridge

Section Leader: Keith Day

Walkers: Alison Howard, Allan Howard, Roger Price, Peter White, Charles Jarman,

Tracey Boulton, Martin Parker, Bella Husbands, Barry Cooke, Ian Beckett, Sue Beckett, Bill Husbands, Kathleen Footé, Gareth Brentnall, Carol Brentnall, Stuart Holland, Olwen Holland, Indie the dog, Ann Hoar, Dennis O'Dea, Lynne O'Dea, Edward Baskerville, Helen Price, Kev Price, Julie Bamber, Rob Cook, Amelia Cook, Sue Hannam, Tim Hannam, Joseph Hannam, Lucy Hannam.

We received a warm welcome from Edwin Tipper at Lupin Farm who had put out hay bales for us to sit on and delighted in showing people his collection of old vehicles. The sun was warm and it was a pleasure to sit and enjoy the refreshments provided by the Historians, including a cake made by Dennis O'Dea, by the side of a lovely late summer flower border. Again, toilets were made available. Ann and Paul Bowns left the walk at this point, Helen and Kev joined us as we were preparing to move on to the next section at 4pm.

The group had already crossed the road on to the footpath opposite when Julie Bamber and Sue Hannam arrived with their families, so they quickly parked and set off with Allan and Alison to join up with the rest of the group. It was lovely to have three children join us - the next generation of boundary walkers! Luckily, Kathleen stood at strategic points to ensure we did not go the wrong way and we caught up eventually with the group. There was a fly past of display planes and then a group of swans flying in formation over our heads. We walked first towards Orgreave, then left down to the R. Trent. Joseph was racing ahead, showing a great deal more energy than some of us! The dog, Indie, was still full of beans however, and looked as though she could do the whole walk again. We followed the very scenic meandering section of the river, arriving at Yoxall Bridge at 4.50pm. A group photo was taken, everyone congratulated themselves and each other on their achievement, then everyone made their way back to Kings Bromley, by car or foot, having completed the boundary walk of the parish.

That evening, at 8pm, everyone was welcomed to the Howards for drinks and nibbles. A video and photos of the 2004 boundary walk were shown, then there was a chance to look at videos and photos taken on the day of the 2014 walk. Ken Bowcock's booklet about the History of the Perambulation of the Bounds was available for people to look at and Allan had put up old maps to show how the boundary had changed over the years. Everyone was very pleased to receive a certificate marking their participation in the walk, and there was even a certificate for Indie the dog.

A most successful and enjoyable day, no-one looks too exhausted at the end!

