

The Striders and the Jurassic Way

This is the third and final article on the Jurassic Way. When I mention to anybody that The Striders have been walking the Jurassic Way they say that it is a long way to go to do a walk. What they are thinking of is the Jurassic Coast. If you remember your school geography the chalk/limestone lies in a band from the Dorset coast to the Lincolnshire coast with offshoots to the south-east. So the Jurassic passes up the north-west side of Northamptonshire and forms the area known as the Northamptonshire Heights. As I have said in previous articles it is pleasant rolling countryside dotted with the occasional small wood and many picturesque villages.

You left us last in Sibbertoft. I have been very remiss and have not kept you up to date because since then we have walked more than 30 miles and completed the walk in Stamford. I mentioned the SNVB mini-bus in my last article and we continued to hire it to get us to the start of the days walking and to pick us up at the end of the walk. A great boon.

The sections were Sibbertoft to Gretton (10.84 miles), Gretton to the Top Lodge Visitor centre at Fineshades Wood (10.54 miles) and Top lodge to Stamford (9.5 miles).

In the section from Sibbertoft to Gretton we walked first to East Farndon a village less than a mile from the southern edge of Market Harborough. From here we dropped down in to Great Oxenden and then up into Braybrooke still heading northwards. We skirted Brampton Wood before entering Stoke Albany. Here there is a wooden tablet over the porch that requests men to scrape their shoes and women to remove their pattens – strapped wooden soles for raising shoes above the mud. The Way passes through East Carleton Country Park – a good opportunity for coffee. From Cottingham we dropped down in to the Welland valley and up in to Great Easton just south of Eyebrook Reservoir. Then down again in to the valley and up to Rockingham with great views of the castle which was re-built by the Watson family in Tudor times. Passing through the village we read that it was largely destroyed during the Civil War. The family occupies the castle to this day. And so along the escarpment to Gretton and the bus journey home.

Before leaving Gretton on the next section most of the party looked at the stocks and whipping post which are particularly fine. I say most because I missed them but never mind I did see them at a later date when I did this section again with Peter and Moira Cooper and Jannette all of whom had missed it previously. The countryside from Gretton to Harringworth was changed much in 19th century by the excavation of iron-ore. As we approached Harringworth we came to the edge of the escarpment again and looked down on the magnificent viaduct. (See illustrations).



We now had a very pleasant walk alongside the River Welland. On through Barrowden and Wakerley Great Wood to cross the A43 before entering Fineshades Wood (named after the abbey that stood close to where the A43 passes). It had been a very hot day so at the visitor centre we enjoyed a welcome ice cream before boarding the bus.

The final section came and we walked through Fineshades Wood with great expectations (of the cream tea that was to come). After the wood we found the Welland yet again and followed its course to Ketton. We skirted this village, crossed the Welland and climbed towards Easton on the Hill. We were grateful to find some shade in which to have our lunch before entering our last village. Although much extended the village does have a pleasant centre.

From here it was a short walk crossing the railway; going under the A1; and again crossing the Welland to climb in to Stamford. The walk finished at the central square (see photo) but we found the strength to walk to the café where they had a cream tea waiting for us. What a way to complete and celebrate the end of the walk.



I would like to thank everybody who helped to make this venture a success. Peter, Geoff and Martin used their GPS systems to aid me in navigation (we only deviated from our way once in the whole route); Kate B for organising the cream tea; and everybody who came along on the walk.

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