

Chelmsford U3A Travel Group

Report on Chelmsford's U3A Travel Club's walking holiday in the Mendips 23rd-27th May 2016

Recently seventeen members of the Travel Club enjoyed another walking holiday with Graham and Sue of Bath & West Country walks, this time staying at the 4* Centurion Hotel in Midsomer Norton, with its gym, pool, Jacuzzi and golf course. Each day we could choose from two walks, the longer walks ranged from 9.5 – to 7.5 miles and the shorter walks were between 6 and 5 miles. Every day we left the Hotel after an excellent breakfast with our packed lunches and returned for a three course evening meal, all included in the price.

On Tuesday we set off after a short tour of the church and churchyard from the delightful conservation village of Mells. The scent of wild garlic was everywhere, with the wooded areas around completely carpeted in the white perfumed flowers as we left the grey stone walls of the village behind. One group had views of Babbington House, a very upmarket wedding venue, and then along Colliers Way, a former train line taking coal from Somerset to London, and the other group followed the gurgling stream through the wooded Wadbury Valley past a famous 18th C forge industry site and onto the picturesque village of Nunney to view the 13th C fortified house and moat which was damaged in the civil war. Both groups gathered afterwards in the charming Secret Garden Nursery café for a well earned tea and to meet Charlie, the cake eating dog.

We parked in Waitrose Car Park in Wells on Wednesday for two more circular walks. One group picnicked in a buttercup meadow overlooking the village of Croscombe and the other picnicked by the Bishop's Palace in the delightful City of Wells after walking to Dinder. As it was market day there was time for some shopping and sightseeing too.

For Thursday's walk, we drove for 40 minutes east, to the National Trust Property of Stourhead for a figure of eight walk encompassing the chalk downs and White Sheet Hill, with its early farming terraces and later views of Alfred's Tower, a folly, in the wooded scenery on the horizon. Some found time to visit Stourhead House and the garden, which apparently is one of the most famous in England. The azaleas and rhododendrons were at their showy best with miles of walks around the Capability Brown Garden and Lake. As usual we finished our walks with a reward of afternoon tea or ice cream from the NT Tea room.

The weather was kind to us with lots of sunshine and the waterproofs not used, safely stored in the rucksacks. The group got on well with plenty of banter and fun, with lively discussions around the dining table. Apart from a lost scarf, hat and gilet and an encounter with a soggy cow pat, all went according to plan.

Next year's holiday hasn't been organised yet, but if you like the countryside, enjoy walking and of course eating cake, you're always welcome to join us.

Clare Lyne.