

STRETCHERS

April – May 2024 Newsletter

Monday January 22nd

A group of 14 members met at the Haxey Gate Inn, just south of the village of Haxey, to do a walk of just under 5 miles down to West Stockwith and back. Luckily we missed the worst of Storm Isha! Although the winds were still strong, the sun was shining and it was not too muddy.

We walked from the pub following the River Idle to two old pumping houses that were originally used to help drain the land south of the river. We then took the path towards Misterton reaching the Chesterfield Canal and walked along the towpath to West Stockwith. There we passed the marina and went along the bank of the River Trent for a short way. We then turned down a footpath, passed a pub with a micro brewery, and followed the bank of the River Idle back to the Haxey Gate Inn. We had a lovely lunch mostly taken from the Monday Madness Menu! A really nice morning was had by all.

Guy and Carol Howitt



Monday January 8th

On Monday January 8th 2024 Stretchers met at Bawtry Caravans to start the rearranged walk from December. Although during the previous couple of weeks there had been non-stop rain the route had been planned to ensure we were not ploughing through mud.

There was a good turnout including a couple of new members. Everyone was ready to blow away the cobwebs after the Christmas period. The walk commenced along Bawtry Road before turning off to walk along a lane to Austerfield Maize. Out into Austerfield, along the road to Bawtry before turning back to walk through King's Wood ready for a very pleasant lunch at Classic and Contemporary. An enjoyable walk blessed by good weather.

Jenny Burnett



The trials and tribulations of a Group Leader

The weather forecast was poor. The planned walk was from Firbeck to Roche Abbey and back, followed by lunch at the Black Lion in Firbeck. The walk leader was unavailable so as I know the area I offered to take over. We had already had a lot of rain in the previous few days and I started to get messages early on the day of the walk. Folks were waking up to rain running down their windows. People were dropping out. I had a decision to make.

To walk or not to walk.....

I decided not. It would have been muddy and slippery underfoot and heavy rain would have put people's waterproofs to the test - so I set about contacting those people who had previously said they were coming. The WhatsApp group helped as I got an immediate response from some. I emailed as well and then set about phoning or texting those who I hadn't heard from. It was a long list so it took a while.

I had pre booked the pub and they didn't open until 12 so I thought I would drive to Firbeck. Not a long drive for me but just as I approached the pub I heard a rhythmic scraping. I must have caught something on the car. I pulled into the car park and to my dismay realised I had picked up a bit of S shaped heavy gauge wire in my rear tyre which had scraped the paint above the wheel arch as well as puncturing the tyre.

I spotted a car across the road with a lady who looked as if she might be a walker and discovered she was a Sheffield member - but not yet a Doncaster member - who was planning to walk. I also went to the pub kitchen entrance to cancel the pre booked table - they were grateful for the heads up.

Messages from the AA kept moving their arrival time later and later. It was a long wait but at least I wasn't on the side of a motorway. The pub opened at 12 and the AA finally arrived about 12.30 just as I was settling down to my lunch. I could soon get on my way after they fitted the spare tyre.

The walk was rearranged for the following Monday - a smaller party this time as it wasn't our usual day. Yet again the weather was foul and I cancelled. Fingers crossed for our Christmas walk - in January!

So the tyre has been replaced and the paintwork will follow. A very expensive morning for a cancelled walk!!

Wendy Hattrell 27-11-23

December 2023 – January 2024 Newsletter

October 2023

On a dismal morning 12 hardy souls assembled at the Newton Arms, Sprotbrough for what was a hastily re-arranged walk due to flooding and sodden fields. From the pub we walked down Newton Lane to the farm and down to the river Don. Passing along a muddy track and over a small stile we reached a place where years ago a ferry man would, for a few coppers, row you across the river to sample the delights of Hexthorpe Flats. Further on in a field we saw a late born calf asleep besides a watchful mother. Then over the railway bridge and down the track back to Newton Lane. Passing through the housing estate to enter the cycle way we made our way over to Cusworth Hall and walked around the lake stopping for a photo shoot besides a small waterfall. Then retracing our steps back to the Newton Arms for some welcome food and pleasant conversation.

Martin Clarke



August – September 2023 Newsletter

May 2023

There was an excellent turnout for this month's visit to Hatfield Moor which forms part of the Humberhead Peatlands National Nature Reserve to the east of Doncaster; a birdwatchers' paradise. This landscape includes Britain's largest area of lowland bog which supports a variety of wildlife including a healthy population of adders; although none were seen today, we did all hear the distinct call of a cuckoo.

These peatlands are England's largest example of lowland raised mires which are rare throughout Europe. The waterlogged and acidic conditions favour the growth of sphagnum moss; the old dead stems of which do not rot but build up leading to the formation of peat which has taken place over 4000 years.

It is this peat which has been exploited over hundreds of years ultimately lowering the water table hence extraction has been brought to a halt and a project devised to manage the reserve and bring peat formation back to life. Did you know that it takes approximately ten years for 1cm of peat to form.

Along the walk there is a noticeable mound in the landscape which is the site of a Polish bomber crash in Yorkshire during WW2. The crew were returning in their Vickers Wellington to RAF Lindholme in 1941 from an operational flight to Cologne and four members perished.

Adjacent to the memorial is a replica of a Neolithic pathway reconstructed with timber with radiocarbon dating the original pathway to 2900-2500 BC .

Peter Chubb



April 2023: Laughton round via Roche Abbey

Laughton is an Anglo-Saxon settlement the 'en le Morthen' in it's name means meeting place, All Saints' Church is on the site of the original church with various rebuilds over the centuries. The spire is 185 ft. tall and can be seen far and wide.

The 7-mile walk started at the Lakeside Café and after a short walk through the village we started across the fields towards Firbeck, walking up a gentle rise through fields first of wheat then rapeseed oil. On reaching Firbeck we skirted the village and headed across open fields towards the hamlet of Stone and Roche Abbey.

There was a brief stop at the RAF Memorial outside the village. Several squadrons were based in the area from 1940-48. Kings Wood still has remnants of buildings used by the RAF. The fields here are open and a lazy north wind blew across the fields, where the sound of a curlew was heard.

We passed through Stone on our way to Roche Abbey where the going was a little soft. As we walked through a shallow valley the Abbey came into sight and we followed the route taken by monks a thousand years ago to the turning point in our walk.

The route out of the Abbey grounds was muddy and steep going through wood and past the lake that feeds the Abbey with running water. We now returned to open fields for the walk back to Laughton for lunch.

One final note: The St. Ledger was originally run in the Firbeck area.

John Wheeldon



January 23rd

A group of 13 members met at the Haxey Gate Inn, just south of the village of Haxey, to do a walk of just under 5 miles down to West Stockwith and back. Although it was during the cold spell, the weather was kind with lots of sunshine and light winds.

We walked from the pub following the River Idle to two old pumping houses that were originally used to help drain the land south of the river. We then took the path towards Misterton reaching the Chesterfield Canal and walked along the towpath to West Stockwith. There we passed the marina and went along the bank of the River Trent for a short way. Then we turned down a footpath, passed a pub with a micro brewery and followed the bank of the River Idle back to the Haxey Gate Inn where we stopped for a very pleasant lunch. A very enjoyable morning was had by all!

Guy Howitt



We met late November for our early Stretchers Christmas walk at the Ship Inn at Newington near Austerfield. It was a cold morning but fortunately dry as we had had a lot of rain previously. This was an area I thought I knew well but Wendy managed to surprise me. After a short walk along the Misson Road we turned right to walk along the River Idle.

The ground was really good for walking although we were surrounded by lakes. For those amongst us who were able to recognise the water birds there were plenty to see. We entered Misson on the outskirts of the village where we passed lots of renovated older properties, passed the church and out into the countryside once again. Still the terrain was good for walking but on turning the corner we were faced by a field containing a large number of cows and mud! We managed to navigate the path along side the cows with no-one succumbing to the mud. We then turned back towards the village. Again the ground was good to walk on. By now the weather had brightened and spirits were high as we were walking back towards lunch.

The timing was spot on and as we finally turned back towards the pub for a short walk along the road we arrived back in time for a much needed meal. The walk was just what we needed to blow away the cobwebs, enjoy the countryside and share a Christmas meal. Looking forward to more of the same in 2023.

Jenny Burnett



October

October's Stretchers walk for ten of us was a 6.5 mile circuitous route of Branton, four miles east of Doncaster.

Starting at Boston Park farm on the Blaxton to Thorne road we walked along the banks of the river Torne for just over two miles to Auckley, coming out by the Eagle and Child; a pub dating back to 1492 with the present property dating back to 1820. It's home to a decent real ale and good food.

The river's source is in the grounds of Sandbeck Hall, private residence of Lord Scarborough. It joins the river Idle and empties into the river Trent with much of it being an engineered channel.

In spite of the recent heavy rain, we did not experience undue wet conditions underfoot and were even blessed with good weather.

Turning right over the bridge on the Doncaster road, we went through to Branton. It is thought that the Anglo-Saxon origins of this name were 'enclosure where broom grew' and the plant can still be seen by the roadside.

Turning right again we then walked the length of Gatewood Lane to the farm where literally 1000s of chicken were roaming freely outside.

From there it was but a short walk back to Boston Park farm and refreshments for some in the café.

Peter Chubb



September

The Stretchers September's walk started from St. Mary's Church in Tickhill. St. Mary's is a Grade 1 listed building and has been described as one of the finest medieval churches in Yorkshire. The oldest parts of the building date back to the time of the castle (1109).

The weather was fine with high cloud and patches of blue sky. The group headed south towards Styrrup Golf Club for a walk on the approved paths. Several members of the club were playing and care was needed to avoid the wayward shots of the players. Leaving the golf course behind, we walked between banks of blackberries and dried stems of cow parsley and teasels reaching to the sky.

It was shortly after this when we met the goshawk who was being taken on its daily walk. The goshawk wasn't actually walking. It was on the arm of its handler who was walking. The handler offered to show the bird in flight but the goshawk didn't want to fly so we watched it being fed. Close up they are big and menacing. They are capable of bringing down a goose hence the name. Goshawks are up to 27 inches long with a wingspan of up to 50 inches, and can weigh about 1.5 lb.

After leaving the goshawk, we returned to Tickhill walking parallel to the A1 and a quick walk round the village completing a walk of 6 - 7 miles. Lunch was taken at the Styrrup Golf Club

John Wheeldon





August – September 2022 Newsletter

Stretchers go Caravanning

Stretchers met on Tuesday 14th June at Yorkshire Caravans for their walk. We headed along the main road to Bawtry and after a short while turned into King's Wood. The recent sun and rain had caused the brambles to have a growth spurt! Those in long trousers were OK, the rest in short trousers were extra careful but it wasn't long before we emerged onto a wider main track. Walking through the wood was very pleasant in the sunlight.

The next phase of the walk took us through the Hanson quarry. This area has historically been quarried for sand and continues to be so today. The disused parts of the quarry have become grassed over and provide a pleasant undulating surface to walk on. These areas are now known

as the Mosaic and are regularly used by the public. We saw three organised groups of children enjoying the spaces during the walk, but no wildlife. We left the quarry by the side of the Forest School next to the Austerfield Study Centre.

Crossing the Finningley Bawtry road we turned left and down a small lane to Austerfield Village Green. A path ran through another wooded area towards the golf club and into open countryside. We crossed a field by way of a signed footpath through the crops and re-joined the main road. We crossed the road next to the old waterworks building and down a path which took us back into the Hanson quarry, passing what used to be an old pig farm before reaching the Bawtry Doncaster road once again. After a short walk past some very large and in some cases newly built houses we were back at Yorkshire Caravans.

After completing about 6 miles we were ready for our lunch. A good selection of food options well prepared followed a very enjoyable sunny walk.

Jenny Burnett



Stretchers Walk the Hooton Roberts Round

Tuesday 12 April saw a small group of walkers congregate at the Earl of Strafford, Hooton Roberts for the monthly Stretchers walk. The small number of walkers may have been due to Grandparent babysitting duties during the Easter holidays and/or Covid.

The walk, which was planned by Val Bell, was one that had been cancelled the month before because of muddy paths. Although the skys were grey and threatening we did set off in the dry.

The walk took in the undulating hills of South Yorkshire, which some of the group from the very flat parts of Doncaster thought may be a challenge (me). Initially we walked along well drained footpaths but the mud around the stile on the approach to Old Denaby was a warning of things to come. After walking through parts of the village and admiring the properties we turned up hill for home. We had our first glimpse of bluebells next to the footpath before we reached Conisbrough and crossing the main Doncaster to Rotherham road started the final section of our walk.

It soon became clear why Val had done a different walk the previous month as it became more and more muddy crossing open fields and one very large field was shoulder high with oil seed rape. As we turned into a wooded area the path became boggy! Fortunately, although slipping, sliding and grabbing tree trunks, we all remained upright.

A thoroughly enjoyable walk of approximately 6 miles, which for most of us was concluded by a welcome meal. Thank you Val.

Jenny Burnett



September

It's always a joy to go to Clumber Park. Stretchers met along the Lime Tree Avenue and headed South through a wooded area to join a cycle track, quickly leaving it again to cross a meadow. It was September and the weather was a bit cool – but not raining!

It wasn't long before the familiar bridge came into view and we crossed to continue our walk on the far side. There is a sheltered spot in a short distance where there is usually a pair of swans on the lake – this time there were cygnets as well. We stopped to admire the family. We soon branched onto another cycle track which kept us away from the lake shore and the busy areas, re-joining just before the bridge over the weir.

Oooh the toilets! Was the cry as half the party disappeared and the other half queued for coffee. Such a lovely spot looking down the length of the lake to pause and drink a good cup of coffee. We continued on the familiar route across the causeway but headed up the hill and along to the cricket ground turning left to walk alongside the cedar avenue and head into the pleasure gardens. We couldn't resist a visit to the church before we continued to the café and a welcome lunch.

It was a short walk over the 'mound' to find a cycle track, then the gate through the woods and back to the cars. We are lucky to have Clumber Park so near to us to enjoy, not just the walk round the lake, but also some of the less well known areas.

Wendy Hattrell



October

The Stretchers started their October walk in the historic town of Hatfield. The settlement is of Saxon origin. Here in 633 AD, King Edwin of Northumberland was killed in the Battle of Hatfield Chase by Penda, King of Mercia and notable visitors have included John of Gaunt and Geoffrey Chaucer.

However, we saw no famous faces as we parked up in the Hatfield pub and began our walk. Although the grey sky looked foreboding, we were lucky to get away with just a spot of drizzle. The paths were generally dry and flat taking us through Quarry Park where we enjoyed the woodland paths through this nature reserve.

The walk seemed to take no time at all. Engrossed in our conversations, the five miles vanished beneath our feet and before we knew it we were back at the pub. The rather long wait for our food was tempered by our continued chat until we were fully refreshed, revitalized, and ready for home.

Diane Woolven



8th June 2021

The June walk was a circular route around Tickhill. We met at 10.00 a.m. by the Millpond. I was castigated by a local for referring to it as the "Duckpond" and from there proceeded through Lindrick, crossed Worksop Road, and continued past Tickhill Juniors' Football Club. We then crossed fields via Stump Cross Lane (some were meadows with a profusion of buttercups and other wild flowers including orchids). From there we turned right onto Sandbeck Lane passing Barn Dried Logs. Following a short break in the woods we turned left onto a footpath, crossed Maltby Lane to Limekiln Lane, passing the Miners' Memorial which was erected to commemorate the deaths of 27 men killed in an explosion at Maltby Colliery on 28th July 1923. Twenty five of the miners are still entombed in the old Barnsley workings approximately 800 yards below the surface.

We turned right onto a footpath which passed Quarryfield Alpacas, turning left by the farm to view the alpacas at close quarters, attractive animals in a range of colours. Some had young which are called cria. We returned, by a footpath, to Tickhill where some members continued on to the Royal Oak for lunch.

An enjoyable and interesting walk, well led by Wendy.

Irene Chapman



December - Potteric Carr

We met at 10.00 a.m. on a very wet and windy morning at the café. The footpath from Tofield Hide to West Scrape was cut off by flooding. We set off towards Beeston Plantation then along the track around Loversall Carr, around Willow Marsh up alongside a rail track looking over Huxter Well Marsh and West Scrape then back through the woods to Piper Marsh, on through Black Carr Field to the Education centre returning around Old Eaa Marsh and Decoy Marsh to the café for lunch.

An enjoyable walk in good company irrespective of the atrocious weather.

Tony Hodge



U3A stretchers walk on Tuesday 10th September from Wadworth Church. Eleven of us met at the church car park on a very pleasant morning.

We walked through the 12th century church grounds, we passed Wadworth Hall and went beneath the A1M and the M18 onto Springwell Lane and along the perimeter of Edlington woods.

We walked back under the M18 into Wadworth woods then through fields to Lodge Farm, passed Ant Wood, along by Wilsic Hall school and back into Wadworth village through the sports field back to the church car park,

Seven of us went to the White Hart for a very good lunch.

An enjoyable 5.5 mile walk with good company.

Tony Hodge



9th July— Conisbrough to Doncaster

We met at Doncaster Railway station at 9.20 a.m. and caught the train to Conisbrough. A very nice walk through the woods to the rail viaduct then down by the river Don, with a coffee break at the Boat Inn, Sprotbrough, then on our way along the Don to North bridge. It turned out to be a very pleasant walk and warm day, with lunch in town.

Tony Hodge

June – July 2019 Newsletter

Early April, fresh spring morning, dressed for the English winter we came together for the first walk of the newly formed STRETCHERS. Introductions over, we set off on our 5.8 mile walk from Cusworth Hall to Sprotbrough, along the River for a short while, then back up to Cusworth and, even though it was only early April, the sun shone gloriously for us. Hats, scarves and gloves were soon discarded.

We set a steady pace buoyed by the gentle chatter of people getting to know each other. It was a well marked walk, no problems under foot except when our mascot puppy decided to try to get to know each and everyone of the group individually.

The aim of the group was to be more challenging than Strollers but not as demanding as Striders and it appeared we hit the mark as everyone plans to meet up in May.

Vanessa Whaley

