

Walk for Health 15th February 2010

Our first walk for health in 2010 was on Monday 15 February and was approximately 4 miles long. The walk commenced at the Village Hall and took us down Stocking Lane. We branched off left at the bottom of the first hill by the detached bungalow and made our way across two fields to some woods. We then entered another field and emerged on Clappins Lane from where we proceeded towards North Dean. A footpath between some houses took us up Pigotts Hill which was perfect for getting the blood circulated and certainly warmed us up! Stopping at the top Philip Hussey told us that the field in which we were present had been the location of a De Havilland Mosquito aircraft crash towards the end of the Second World War. Philip thought that the crew managed to bail out safely. He added that Edward Nuttgens, a worker in stained glass, lived in The Studio, a house located on the hill. He also remembered a fire at the studio towards the end of the war. The family still live there and have continued the craft to this day. Philip mentioned Pigotts Farm which is beyond The Studio and is occupied by Nick Wheeler-Robinson., and is the location of the celebrated music centre. Between 1928 and 1940 this was the home of Eric Gill, a sculptor who had a commune and his own resident priest. Gill amongst much else, designed Gill San-Serif lettering which is used on the London Underground. He is buried in Speen Chapel graveyard. Finally Philip mentioned a rule of thumb that his father used regarding banks running down steep hills between fields (at the time we were facing down Pigotts Hill). As we looked down he explained that the ground to the left of the bank would be higher than that to the right because ploughs from earlier times turned the soil to the right as they could only plough downhill on steep hills. Of course fields were ploughed across and this created lynchets running along the contours of the hill. Philip said that he had never found an exception to the rule and would be interested to learn of one.

We continued on our way by climbing a stile and entering woods where we walked below the ridge of the hill. At a cross point we descended through fields to join the road alongside the Beech Dean ice cream factory. We then climbed up the opposite hill back towards Walters Ash and entered the woods. When we were behind the RAF living quarters we separated company with those wishing a slightly shorter walk turning left and returning to Clappins Lane whilst those taking advantage of a longer walk turned right and headed towards the Lacey Green direction. We emerged onto the lane where Coles and Blackwell are located and then crossed into Bradenham Hill Lane. Proceeding down the lane we turned left onto a public footpath – opposite the entrance to the RAF married quarters – leading into the woods and emerged by Forge Road. We then made our way back to the Village Hall via the footpath behind the houses.

This was a most pleasant walk and a good social occasion judging by the amount of chatter!