

NEW YEAR'S DAY WALK 2014

Short version 4 miles - 1½ hours

Whole walk - 6+ miles - say 2 + hours

We start from outside the Greyhound on our 7th New Year's Day Walk (and the 22nd in the series of village walks so far!) at 11:00 hrs.

Walk up the High Street to and through the narrows, cross over (still with care) to the high level footpath and then to the War Memorial. When we approach the field gate above take the right hand path that follows the road below and then alongside it. Take the path behind the hedge which brings us out opposite the Hatchgate (which would have prevented our cattle from wandering off the common). Cross over with care and carry on towards Hill Bottom until we reach and turn up the Bridle Road on our left.

This bridleway brings us out on the Hill Bottom road above The Sun (*short walk - park on the left and meet here at 11:30*). Cross straight over to the bridle road opposite to enter Great Oaks Wood (for Nelson's ships?). On entering the woodland negotiate the various obstacles used to prevent vehicular entry; the bridleways fork here, take the left hand one (the other will lead you to Exlade Street) and go straight ahead to reach a crossing of paths. We can go straight ahead through the builder's yard or turn slightly left and then straight ahead; both paths lead onto the road from Crays Pond to Goring Heath. On the opposite side there is a broad lane 'Eastfield Lane' which is the next part of our route. This muddy but pleasant old lane passes one or two cottages to emerge onto the corner of Shirvells Hill and Potkiln Lane in Woodcote.

Turn left onto the road and almost immediately left through a kissing gate into the adjacent field. Ignore the noisy dogs and head towards the gateway on the other side of the field. Follow the hedgerow into the next field and then to the right hand gateway leading into a further field. You will reach and cross a slippery stile to emerge by the White Lion pub (presently closed). Follow the verge to the corner and then turn left (stay on the verge) past the small housing estate until, on the other side of the road, you see a footpath sign near the entrance to the Oratory Prep's playing field. Cross over with care to the kissing gate, turn right on entry to the field and follow the cut grass section marking the path; this turns left and then shortly over in the distance by the main road you will see a dog waste bin. This is sensibly placed at the entry and is our exit point.

Cross over the road with care to the verge opposite and turn right down the charming lane leading to Blackbird's Bottom. Just after Blackbird's Cottage turn left through the sequence of staddle stones up to the kissing gate which gives access to the field above. The next gate is obvious across the field and this leads to a further one where you will be on a lane you may recognise from previous walks (at Coldharbour). Turn left onto the lane and then right at the next junction. Shortly afterwards go through a kissing gate on your left and head to the left of the tree lined dew pond towards another gate and field. The path will take you onto the road leading to Coombe End Farm. (*For the short walk turn left here to the main road, cross with care and head back to your car*). Otherwise turn right onto this road and shortly afterwards left through a side gate - please make sure you close this gate.

The footpath leads down the avenue of horse chestnut trees and felled sweet chestnut trees (ask the National Trust why these were felled!). As you pass Boundary Farm on your left the path narrows as it swings left into the woodland beyond - follow the narrow fenced path to its junction with another of our footpaths. Go through the kissing gate and turn left to reach another gate and the open field above Beech Farm. Follow the fence line to another gate, cross over to the greensward by the side of the farm's outbuilding to a gate and onto a fenced path. When this reaches another gate you enter a field where there may be cattle or sheep (*dogs on leads please*). Follow the right hand boundary of the nearby woodland (Stoneycroft Plantation) to meet your final gate and to drop down to the War Memorial and home.

Meet in the Greyhound and celebrate with a beer. Just over 6 miles with a few new paths under your boots.

Eric