

Gloucester Cathedral Ramblers Walk - Saturday 15 March 2025 - Report

Kempley: Daffodil Way

On the Ides of March, 15 Ramblers walked the part of the Daffodil Way around Kempley. Thirteen of us - Bruce, Ginny, Helen, Ian, Jacqui, Jon, Lucy, Maggie, Margaret, Michael, Mike, Philip and me - met at Gloucester Transport Hub Bay F for the No 32 Stagecoach service bus to Newent. The bus in Bay F had no service number, no destination and no driver. Two minutes before the bus was due to leave, information about it disappeared from both the Bay F and the main Departures Boards. On enquiring at the Information Desk, I was told that the bus had not been cancelled and the disappearance from the electronic displays simply meant that it was running late. A few minutes after that, a driver walked to the bus in Bay F showing us a sheet of A4 paper on which was stencilled the number '32'. He boarded the bus and stuck the sheet of paper in the front windscreen. We, and others, boarded the bus. We were seven minutes late leaving but had a trouble-free run and arrived in Newent five minutes late.

From last year, 2024, a free Daffodil Shuttle-bus has operated between Newent and Dymock, Kempley, and Oxenhall on their respective daffodil weekends made possible by financial support from both Gloucestershire and Herefordshire County Councils and the Forest of Dean District Council. At 10.30, we caught the first shuttle-bus to Kempley and were treated to a guided tour en route by our driver, Jason. On alighting at the southern end of Kempley Green, we were met by Jo and Kate, a new member of the Ramblers, who I welcomed and introduced to those of us who had just got off the bus.

We set off west along the Daffodil Way across open pasture, with occasional clumps of wild daffodils, for about 1.3 km to the hamlet of Fishpool, where we joined a lane downhill to Kempley Brook. We followed the brook north, flanked by daffodils, for about 1.8 km before joining a narrow road for about 300 metres to St Mary's Church, Kempley. The church was built circa 1130 and was made redundant in 1975. It is now cared for by English Heritage and contains some of the best preserved medieval wall paintings in England; those in the chancel are the most complete set of Romanesque paintings in northern Europe. The paintings were covered with whitewash during the Reformation and were not re-discovered until 1872.

After about 30 minutes in the church and churchyard, and group photographs had been taken (see attached), we headed south along the Three Choirs Way, passing Kempley Court. We left the Three Choirs Way after about 2 km and walked uphill across a very large field to Kempley Village Hall, where we tucked into some splendid refreshments.

Jo and Kate left us after their snacks. I had planned to use the shuttle-bus for the remaining 13 of us to return to Newent, but the buses were very full. Bruce suggested that some of us could walk the 5 miles to Newent, thereby freeing up seats on the shuttle-bus for those more in need. Four of us followed Bruce's lead. As our google-maps ETA in Newent was only one minute before the Gloucester bus was due to leave, we maintained a brisk pace. Meanwhile, Margaret and Jacqui walked to Gwen and Vera's Field (managed by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust), where we had stopped briefly en route to Kempley and which was a veritable sea of daffodils. The remaining six Ramblers eventually caught a shuttle-bus, which, in the event, also picked up Margaret and Jacqui. The five who walked arrived in Newent at 14.57, and all 13 of us were reunited in time to catch the No 32 service bus, arriving in Gloucester at 15.40.

In all, the walk I had planned was about 5 miles, with additional walks for seven of us. The weather was ideal: cloudy, with some sun; dry, with a humidity of 66%; a temperature of about 9°C; and a chilly north-easterly wind of about 10 mph. It was a most enjoyable day, with excellent walking companions and interesting conversations, against a backdrop of the beauty of the natural world, including sumptuous wild daffodils. It was good to be joined by Kate for her first walk with us. I am grateful to Jon Dickinson and Ian Richards for the photographs.

Peter Barrett

17 March 2025