

Walks Around Walsham – It's Not About Deer

The second walk starts in the village at the pound on the corner of Townhouse Road and Palmer Street. The pound is a brick enclosure, now without a gate, that was built during the Victorian era to house animals found loose around the village. They were released on payment of a fine. Turn into Jolley's Way and then immediately left, taking the track between hedge and ditch towards the two cottages. Just before Plantation Cottage turn right through the gateway and follow the footpath up the hill keeping the hedge on your left. This is Mill Track and once was a wide green lane. It's now ploughed to a very narrow path and can be awkward to walk on when it's slippery. No wide boundaries for wildlife here. The crops swaying in the breeze are like a sea of green now. The hedge is a mixture of hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, ash and field maple. A good source of blackberries and sloes in the autumn. The path continues to climb. To your left is Folly Hall and somewhere around the highest point and close to the track was the position of a windmill, long since demolished. There is a pond on the other side of Folly Hall's drive. There are many of these ponds scattered around the fields. They are generally given over to wildlife now but were initially dug to provide water for the working horses that laboured up and down the fields. Ahead, the trees of Hartshall Farm come into view. Until recently this was a tree nursery with a reputation for providing unusual and rare species. There is now a maturing treeline that contains a wonderful variety of shapes and colours.

Cross the road passing Autumn House, this location is still known as Bribery in memory of the cottages that were here until recently. The track, now Hartshall Lane, heads downhill and is now wide and ditched on both sides, a real green lane. It was once the main route to Westhorpe. Part way along this track, and pointing in both directions is a footpath sign, but as no other track joins it here I have often wondered what the point of it is. The name Hartshall is a derivation of hoerdes haugh with roots possibly going back to Anglo Saxon times. It has nothing to do with deer (harts), although muntjac, roe deer, and even red deer can be seen in the area. Buzzards are common, there's a pair of barn owls and I've seen red kite too. Go over the increasingly rickety bridge, the stream is the same stream that flows through the village, then at last you have the shade and lush growth of the plantation of Hartshall Farm. Beyond this you emerge into the sunshine again. This part of the lane was hedged all the way to the road until a few years ago. The loss of habitat for the wildlife must have been devastating. There were masses of primulas and cowslips this year which were mowed unfortunately before the cowslips seeded. We will have to wait until next spring to find out how well they do.

You join the road at Botany, where last month's walk started. Turn right and head along the road on what was part of the old Hundred Lane. It is wide, ditched on both sides and the uncut verges are a mass of grasses, docks, sheep/cow parsley, nettles,

buttercups and dog's mercury. The lone oak tree marks the sharp bend in the road, then turning right you leave the Hundred lane and pass clumps of pelargoniums, poppies and a few isolated trees clinging to the edge of the fields, almost ploughed under. Cross the stream, the same stream as before and head uphill. There are often hares about here and if you're lucky you'll see King, a young shire horse being put through his paces pulling a carriage. To your left is a collection of willows around another of those field ponds. Carry on past three farmhouses. At the third, Crownland Farm, where there's an old water pump, turn right over the stile and follow the path along the fence, over the ditch and across the field alongside the hedge. As you reach the brow of the hill you can see all the way round from Palmer Street on the left, pass Cranmer Farm ahead to Hartshall Farm on the right. At the end of the field turn left and head back down the footpath towards Jolley's Way and the pound.



Hartshall Lane