

## Steel City Wanderers - "A Walk Around Owlthorpe"



On a very warm Thursday morning (23 June 2022), the Steel City Wanderers met on Moorthorpe Way (just below the Donetsk Way tram stop). From there, we embarked on an informative and enjoyable walk around the by-ways of Owlthorpe, lead by Gary Monaghan and Sandra Fretwell-Smith of the Owlthorpe Fields Action Group. Despite being a few minutes away from a very urban environment, we rambled over green hills and along country paths. As we walked Gary and Sandra, told us much about the history of the area and spoke about the flora and fauna found en-route.

Venturing through Hanging Lea and Ochre Dyke woodland, we came across remnants of the mining industry that was present here, including capped off mineshafts. The walk encompassed most of the Owlthorpe Heritage & Nature Trail, as illustrated by information boards at various locations along the walk.

In Westfield Plantation we learned that this wildlife site is listed for the presence of nationally important bird species and ancient woodland indicator species.

Moving ever upwards, we were rewarded with magnificent and extensive views across South East Sheffield towards Rotherham and North East Derbyshire in the east.

As we walked back down - it's a circular route so we were constantly seeing 'new views' - Sandra told us about stigmara fossils; when crops have been harvested these fossils are frequently spotted lying on the surface. Stigmara are the fossilised roots of trees that are found in ancient soils and are around 300 million years old! Now that conjured up rather surreal images - 300 million years ago Owlthorpe was tropical, wet and swampy!

However, there was a disturbing angle to the walk when we were able to observe, first hand, ongoing building work (houses) currently on-going in the area. It's difficult to write about this without straying into 'politics' and commenting on the actions of the city council. However, I would invite you to check out the links below to learn more about the important conservation work of the OAG and what they are doing to protect this beautiful location from the bulldozers.

OAG website: <https://www.owlthorpefields-actiongroup.org.uk/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Owlthorpe-Fields-Action-Group-476779306142625/>

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/save\\_our\\_fields](https://twitter.com/save_our_fields)



In all, our 'wanderings' lasted about 90 minutes, and whilst we were all rather hot and tired when we arrived back at Moorthorpe Drive, we felt refreshed by our immersion in such a marvellous green space.

Sandra and Gary you were excellent guides - although we learned a lot, we also shared some laughs along the way – a big “thank you” from the Wanderers.

Brian Clark  
Steel City Wanderers