

## The Wolds Drive

We met at Stoupes Farm, by kind permission of Mr. Spencer & son.

This farm stands on what must be one of the oldest crossroads in the country, that of a prehistoric drove road travelling North/South between the settlements of Caistor & Horncastle (now the B1225, Caistor High Street ) & the roman road travelling East/West from the salt pans at the coast, to Lincoln & the roman settlement there. Most sections of the roman road that are still extant are good grass lanes, some sections are “missing” completely, some sections have modern villages upon them, such as Tetford. We opted for parts of the green lane!

Participants in the treasure hunt left Stoupes Farm in an easterly direction on the roman road. The weather was bright & dry, with a breeze which kept the flies away, & the clouds moving, so that we had sunshine & shadow – ideal! After approximately three quarters of a mile on the roman road the route turned left up a Bridle Road through corn fields & into the small village of Ranby. The first clue was found here, very easy, the Hydrant number. Directions & a marker arrow sent us right towards Goulceby. This stretch was on very quiet country lanes amid lovely scenery. The next clue was at a small road junction, where the letters on the boundary marker were found to be “LCC”. Ever onward towards Goulceby, down a long incline with lovely views of the wolds. Near the river we were looking to see “who crosses here?” & it was a “duck crossing” sign. A very short distance on we were looking for “what station?” & found on the river bridge the information that this was “Goulceby Gauging Station”. I’m not at all sure what a gauging station does – but I now know where there is one.

Following the long descent there was an equally long & somewhat steeper climb on the road that enters the top of Goulceby. Here we needed to identify whose Church it was – “All Saints”, so no favouritism there. This section was quite undulating & maybe a little testing for members from the “flat country”. The route continued along the top edge of the village to the third turning on the right “Halls Hill”, where there was warning of a steep descent. On the way down we were looking for a possible home for Worzel Gummidge, this proved to be “Mangold Hill Farm”. Onward & downwards to the water splash where Clive & Angela were lurking with camera at the ready. Some excellent pictures resulted, including a picture of a crayfish making its way across the ford! Something of a surprise to everyone. The route now wound through Goulceby, where we were looking to see whose reign the postbox was erected in ( GR) before turning left towards Hemingby.

This section was uphill again, as we left Goulceby we were looking first for the trees the house & paddock were named after (The Beeches) then the speed limit on the bridleway. Somewhat unusual that, must have very fast horses! However, the bridleway also serves as the approach to an old farmhouse & they have a 10mph sign on it. This was a very undulating section, some quite steep, good for getting horses fit, & finding out those that aren’t. We continued to the right hand turn, still signed “Hemingby”. This is a glorious stretch of road. It is obviously an old drove route, approximately 30feet wide with a 12 foot strip of tarmac down the middle, mown grass verges & views over half the county.

We drove it for about a mile & a half collecting the answers to two more clues, then met another crossing point with the roman road where we turned right. Here we found the answer to the last clue “ who can use this route”? It is a restricted byway & has little illustrations of who can use it; walkers, cyclists, riders & horse drawn vehicles.

There have been problems on this stretch with new age travellers. The Rights of Way Department have put in a gate system that allows horsedrawn vehicles through as it is, & relevant farmers have a key to open a second wider gate to allow access to farm machinery into fields along the way. It was interesting to observe that the larger gates had been rammed & bent on both the easterly & westerly sections of this crossing. The padlocks had also been attacked with a pretty hefty instrument, all to no avail. This does illustrate some of the problems which face the RoW departments. Should you come across this sort of damage do let them know.

We continued our drive westerly along the roman road, more wonderful views, downhill again to the market bridge, then upwards for the return to Stoupes Farm. Clive & Angela had returned from their post, marked the questionnaires & it was duly declared that Carol & Richard Wood driving Broc were the worthy winners. The drive was approximately seven miles, almost half off road.

The Wolds Trail is 120km long, it is a circular route much of which is off road, the remainder on quiet lanes. It is to have something of a “great opening”, though due to two unresolved “problems” the date has not yet been set. The RoW department would love a “grand gathering” of driven horses/ponies at the opening as they are hoping to attract good publicity from it. Watch this space! Many thanks to all those who participated in the treasure hunt, & also gave permission for their photos to be used by the RoW dept for publicity purposes.