

Report on Ashridge Estate bluebell walk, 27th April 2015

Report and Photographs by Dave Talbot

Long walk: Ashridge Estate, Moneybury Hill, Ringshall, Near Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, HP4 1LT

Ron Collins, who leads the monthly FONC longer walks, had originally scheduled this walk for 20th April 2015. However, the weather has been quite cool this year which delayed the opening of the bluebells, which are the main attraction at Ashridge Estate in the spring. So, a week later than usual on Monday 27th April, 18 of us and two dogs made the well worthwhile journey to the National Trust run Ashridge Estate, near Berkhamsted. Ashridge Estate is a 2,000 hectare (5,000 acres) area of the Chiltern Hills with beech and oak woodlands, commons and chalk downlands. These very different landscapes each support a rich variety of wildlife, including carpets of bluebells in spring, rare butterflies in summer and the fallow deer that rut in autumn. The National Trust took on the Ashridge Estate in 1926 and manages the landscape as a working estate, continuing 3,000 years of tradition.

We completed a 5 mile walk around the estate in glorious sunshine and some of us were just starting to wonder where were these bluebells, when, on the horizon a familiar blue haze under the fresh green beech canopy started to appear. What was particularly striking was the sheer extent of the area carpeted in blue. This last part of the walk was truly magical, surrounded by the sight and smell of thousands of bluebells. Having returned to our cars it was a short trip for most of us to The Greyhound in Aldbury where we had a very nice lunch, still sitting under blue skies in the sunshine. Certainly one of the most memorable walks FONC has organised.





