

DOWN THE PANG

A walk around Bradfield Parish. Starting and finishing at Rushall Manor Farm

About 4 miles or 6.5 km

Walkers are welcome to park at the Black Barn. There are two pubs in Stanford Dingley for 'after walk refreshments'! *There are two modest hills on this walk and surfaces can be uneven and muddy.*

1. **Rushall Manor Farm.** The 18th century Black Barn and other old farm buildings have been restored and converted as a centre for the John Simonds Educational Trust. It is used to introduce children and young people to the countryside and receives many school visits and youth camping parties every year. Looking south from the Black Barn the hills on the horizon are chalk at the base overlain with sands and clays deposited about 60 to 40 million years ago. They are capped with gravels laid down about half a million years ago by large outwash rivers and streams coming from glaciers north of Oxford. Berkshire was never covered by ice but at times the ground would have been frozen tundra. The Pang valley in front of the hills is much larger than the present day river could have made and shows that in the past water flows were very much greater than today.

2. The path originally ran through the Blue Pools but was formally diverted at the request of the landowner.

3. **The River Pang** is an important chalk stream fed by springs in the chalk rock. Its clear even temperatured alkaline water hosts very special fish, plants and creatures of kinds not found in other rivers. It is a bourne meaning that it



regularly and naturally dries as the water table in the chalk falls below the spring levels. There are only 200 chalk streams in the world and England has 80% of them. We do not treat them with the respect they deserve!

4. **The Blue Pools** were dug to provide watercress beds. They are fed by the Kimberhead Spring and are the perennial head of the river below which it always flows. They are no longer visible from the path but a small area around the spring can still be seen. The blue colour of the water is caused by glauconite dissolved from the local clay. Look for the little swirls of sand pushed up by the rising water.

5. **Bradfield Hall** was built in 1773 by John Barrington – an illegitimate son of George III – for his eldest son – also illegitimate – on condition that he too never married!

6. **Bradfield Mill** is recorded in Domesday Book (1086) but the present building is Victorian. It was built when the watermill was enlarged and converted from being a corn mill to being a pumping station

supplying water to the College, village and workhouse. In the 1870's an attempt was made, without success, to install a turbine to power refrigeration plant.

7. **Bradfield College** (St Andrew's College) was founded in 1850 by the rector of Bradfield to provide a choir for the church. After three years it only had 33 boys but this rose to 300 by the end of the century.



8. **The Owl Pit** is a quarry, started in 1830 to provide chalk to sweeten the acid soils in the surrounding fields. The sequence of geological layers in the chalk face make this a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS).

Dick Greenaway



The Blue Pool spring