

GROVE'S SILVER BEAVERS AND 1ST STANFORD in the VALE BEAVERS' FAMILY CHRISTMAS HIKE

Ten families from Grove's Silver Beavers and eight families from 1st Stanford in the Vale Beavers met in the National Trust Car Park, White Horse Hill. Today's hike was to walk from the car park to visit the White Horse and admire the view, turn southwards onto a grass track, passing the Triangulation Point on the ramparts to Uffington Castle, and then to pass through the gate onto the Ridgeway: turning westwards to walk along the Ridgeway till reaching Wayland's Smithy. We then returned to the cars by retracing our steps and turning left to leave the Ridgeway to walk down the road to the car park.



It was a bright sunny morning, with no clouds and patchy fog in the vale. There had been a hard frost of - 4°C overnight which was very slow to clear, especially where the winter sun had not reached. Icy puddles in places had not defrosted either, and where some had been broken, ice had been scattered like pieces of broken glass. We left the car park at 11.00am and walked towards the White Horse. All of us glad that we had lots of clothing on to keep us warm, as we were heading into a bitter easterly breeze.

We stopped at the head of the Manger and by the eye of the Horse where the Beavers explored the White Horse, whilst the adults admired the view of the Vale. We didn't stop long here as we cooled down rapidly, and needed to get warm again. Turning southwards, we followed the grass track which took us passed the Triangulation point on the ramparts of Uffington Castle, and on towards the gate in the fence and out onto the Ridgeway. The sheep watched us cross this field, from a safe distance!

Turning westwards we now followed the Ridgeway all the way to Wayland's Smithy. The path here was good to walk on, except where the sun had not been and defrosted the ground, so in places there was quite a bit of ice. We met lots of walkers and people riding horses and some hardy souls with lines of mud up their backs, on bicycles. Here we entered the gate and walked toward the ancient long barrow. The Beavers had a great time exploring the underground

chambers and of course were able to stand up inside! The ancient people must have made this the right height for Beaver Scouts specially!! Adults took the opportunity to have a rest, have a hot drink from a flask and something light to eat. We let the children explore, also have something to eat and then we had our photograph taken in front of the entrance to the long barrow. Retracing our steps, we walked eastwards along the Ridgeway and turned left at the crossroads to take the road down towards the car park. We were back in the car park at 12.50.

Some Staged Activity Hikes Away Badges were given out in the car park, and those who missed receiving Hikes Away 1, will have theirs at the next Beaver meetings. Two from Silver Beavers have now completed 3 hikes, and will need to complete two more to get the next badge in the sequence. Four families braved the icy wind to sit at the picnic tables and have lunch! (I have never eaten sandwiches with my gloves on before!!)

This walk was taken from the OS Explorer Map no 170. It was 3 3/4 miles and completed in an hour and 50 minutes. The route was featured recently in the Country Walking Magazine January 2010 issue, along with an article about the White Horse. The magazine arrived on my doormat long after Rachel and I had decided where we would have our Christmas Hike! They say that the walk takes 2 ½ hours and we did it in 1 hour 50. The weather might have had something to do with that, as we had to keep walking to keep warm!

I would like to thank my husband, who decided to sit in the car and keep an eye on the all the cars as there had been reports of thefts from cars in the last week (*time to look at the Vale through binoculars and to attempt the Telegraph crossword-Brian*) and Andy for taking the group photograph. Also thanks to Paul Steptoe for being Silver Beaver's Home Contact - at the last minute, and to Theresa Smith for bringing the Beavers from Stanford in the Vale.

Fiona Stovold -BSL
Silver Beaver Colony
Grove Scout Group