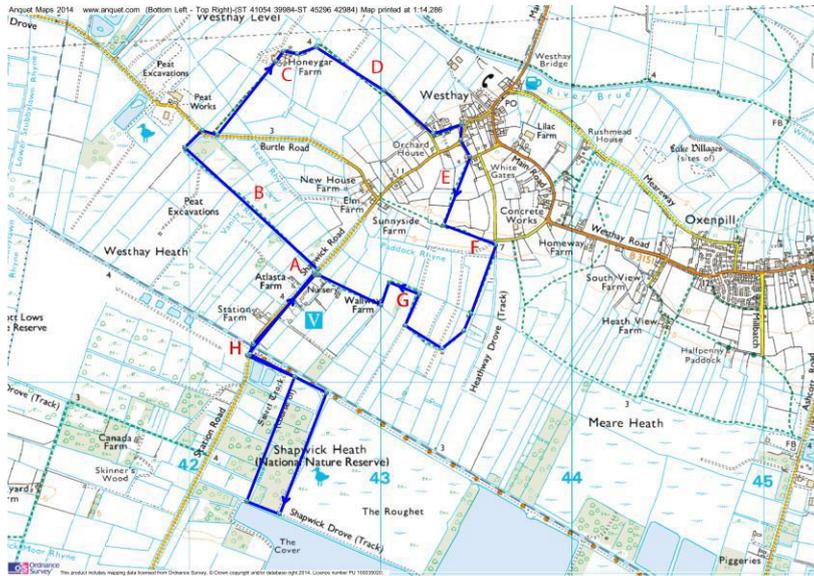


May 18th Shapwick and West Hay

Having decided, after Cambridge, that walking on the level was a great idea, we chose the Somerset Levels for our next outing. We arrived at the Avalon Centre, near Westhay just after 10.00 to find a small but very welcoming Eco Café. After coffee and cakes we headed for a walk based on “Avalon Marshes Heritage Walks: Islands and Peatlands”



The circular walk started off fantastically with several small fungi just inside the first field (A). These turned out to be two species of Parasola – *P. auricoma* and *P. plicatilis*. Soon afterwards, the nerves clicked in as we approached two very large



Long Horn cows, who watched our every move, but thankfully kept on eating. We were happy to traverse the next stile and walk past some ongoing peat extraction (B). Following the excellent map provided by the Avalon centre we did climb to Honeygar Farm (C), one of the ancient areas of slightly higher land that allowed human occupation. Soon afterwards we had our great reward, several perfect examples of *Agrocybe molesta* growing at the side of the road. (D)



The soil was now notably different from the peat that we had walked over earlier. Leaving Westhay, we encountered fields planted with barley but little attempt had been made by the farmer to maintain an obvious public right of way (E). Emerging from the barley, we stopped for a flask of coffee (F) and soon afterwards, having passed several striking examples of rust on Groundsel and Oxalis, we arrived at a fishing lake (G) and were soon back to the Centre for lunch – it was Vegan Thursday!

After chatting to the Manager of the Centre we were encouraged to visit the actual Nature Reserve and see/listen to the wildlife. As is often the case, the afternoon was particularly quiet. The highlight was seeing the magnificent Royal Fern dominating some of the woodland. Another couple of miles had been added to our MyMarathon.



The total distance today was 6.02 miles.

