**Cholsey Circular, Saturday 19th February 2011**

10 walkers, 22 miles – leader Steve Singleton

It was a wet morning with rain forecast until lunchtime, and the leader was not surprised when only seven walkers, including the leader, were at Cholsey Station at 9:11 a.m. The rain stopped as we set off, however, and the remainder of the day was dry but misty, the mist serving to hide Didcot Power Station from our view. About an hour into the walk, the leader received a phone call to say that three more walkers were on their way, but had been directed to the wrong train at Reading Station; they would join us at lunchtime. Our route took us southwest from Cholsey, across the A417 and up Unhill Bottom, where unfortunately we had to negotiate a large field which had been ploughed since the route was recce'd. Shedding the mud from our boots we continued up to cross the Ridgeway, then followed paths in a generally southwesterly direction, descending towards Compton. A slight route-finding error by the leader brought us into the village further south than had been intended, but we found a pleasant footpath to get us back on route. From Compton we set off northwards, climbing to the Ridgeway again; we followed the Ridgeway west for a short distance before picking up paths past Churn Farm and over Churn Knob before descending into Blewbury for lunch. We met our missing three walkers at the Red Lion; they had been misdirected on to a train taking them back towards London, but had then caught a later train back to Cholsey and, lacking maps, had walked to Blewbury by road – full marks for persistence! Those who ate at the Red Lion reported that the food was very good; the remainder of the group ate their sandwiches at a grassy area with benches a short distance away. After lunch we continued west from Blewbury to Upton, then north to East Hagbourne, before turning east to pick up a long track south to Blewburton Hill, where we had a tea stop and admired the view. We descended southward to pick up a path going east to Aston Tirrold, then carried on back to Cholsey at a steadily increasing pace, dictated by the desire of some of the group to catch the 16:37 train; unfortunately we got there a couple of minutes after it had departed, having covered a total distance of approximately 22 miles.