

## **Saturday 31st January 2015, Devonshire Heartland Way with Mike Paddison**

### ***"MUD, MUD, Glorious MUD"***

On Saturday January 31st we were fortunate enough to join an OVA walk around the lovely mid Devon countryside. Eleven of us met at the Exeter bus station and took the X5 to Newton St Cyres, 20 minutes later we had arrived in the centre of the village.

Our leader Mike Paddison set us along a quiet road for an early deviation to the Beer Engine, originally the Railway Hotel, but now a pub and brewery. Unfortunately for the men in our party, the pub didn't open until 11am so we did a u turn back to the footpath towards Creedy River.

After a walk along the edge of a huge arable field bordered by the river, we assembled for a group photo on a footbridge before turning towards the first of our railway line crossings. We were walking along old agricultural paths used by farm workers and villagers going from Newton St Cyres to Stoke Canon which by now were getting very muddy!

Seeing our first snowdrops was quickly followed by a field with 5 muddy Shetland ponies who came to nuzzle us, no doubt hoping for a carrot which none of us had had the foresight to bring. Just when we were wondering when it would be coffee time we came across a barn on Bidwell Farm which was ideal for a quick stop before walking onto Upton Pyne where we enjoyed the lovely smell of a wood bonfire.

As we walked on to Brampford Speke more animals inspected us from afar - were they llamas (***lama glama***, widely used a pack animal and for meat in the Andes. Ed) or were they alpacas? (***lama pacos***, a very much smaller cousin of the llamas, and bred for its wool. Ed.) A voice of authority from a near by group of villagers pronounced them to be alpacas.

On arrival at Brampford Speke we walked through the lovely old churchyard belonging to St Peter's, the beautiful village church. We sat on a stone wall next to the primary school and enjoyed our sandwiches. As we left the churchyard, and crossed over the River Exe, we saw some recently planted trees to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the First World War "dedicated to the people and animals who served, suffered and died in that conflict."

Following the old paths and a disused railway track we walked onto Stoke Canon where we finished our walk and enjoyed a drink beside the log burner in the lovely warm surroundings of the community pub before taking the bus back to Exeter.

Thank you Mike for organising this very pleasant 6 mile walk on a lovely cold but mainly dry sunny morning with good company.

As one member of our party said, this report could be summed up in one word "mud"!

**Sue and Jane**

**31<sup>st</sup> January 2015**

*Deciding where to go next!*



*Who's a pretty boy?, or is it a girl?.*



***pix by Haylor***