Wednesday, 27 January 2016, Newton Poppleford, Joney's Cross & Otter Inn with Jon Roseway

"Mud, mud and more mud"

We met our leader, Jon, at the Otter Inn car park, and pulled on our wet weather gear. Perhaps the thought of an 8 mile walk brightening an otherwise rather gloomy day was the reason for the very respectable total of 14 walkers and 3 well behaved dogs who started off along the quiet lanes of Colaton Raleigh. It was good to be joined by two non-members (who were, of course, given a newsletter and membership forms!).

Jon quoted Winston Churchill in that all that he could guarantee was "mud, toil, sweat and tears and more mud"

We were soon walking through muddy fields, a theme that stayed with us throughout the walk – slippery mud, deep mud, muddy puddles, boggy paths.......those of us with sticks were glad to have them to keep us (mostly) upright. There was talk of the weather – how unseasonably mild it was (evidenced by the daffodils and snowdrops along the way), and much wetter than usual too.

We passed through Newton Poppleford and walked up beside well manicured orchards. Note to self: come here in spring as the blossom will be beautiful.

We had a brief coffee stop and then proceeded up onto the heathland of the Harpford and Aylesbeare Commons, from where there were good views; in better weather these would be fabulous.

Jon showed us erosion in action – a stream was gradually cutting through the hillside, as demonstrated by tree roots which now hung in mid-air. It would only be a matter of time before a footbridge would be swept away.

Unfortunately the mud took its toll on one of our members – Jaquie's Swiss boots decided they'd had enough and the sole of one began to fall off and she had wet feet, so she and Peter had to cut their walk short.

The rest of us descended through drizzle along quiet roads to Colaton Raleigh to complete our walk; a select few of us rewarded ourselves with a good lunch at the Otter Inn.

Penny and Paul Kurowski
30th January 2016