

## Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2016 - Templer Way Stage 2

With appalling weather in prospect, the forecast was strong gusty northerly winds, very cold temperatures and frequent rain squalls, four hardy soles gathered on a forlorn bus station in Exeter. Fortunately the walk organisers had changed the bus route for a quicker one that left the bus terminus some fifteen minutes later - just enough time for a hot chocolate or an Americano.

Suitably fortified we joined the single decker bus for a relatively high speed run to Drumbridges Roundabout, the sound of the rain hammering on the roof and the slow rhythmic motion of the bus windscreen wipers necessary to clear the water had us all wishing we were back in bed.

After alighting at Drumbridges and admiring the new roundabout in all its glory - but typically over budget and late, a new squall started so we hotfooted it off the roundabout, along the Newton Abbot Road and into Stover Park and some shelter.

The comfort facilities in the Information Centre were a most welcome stop.

After donning extra waterproof clothing and generally getting comfortable, we set out on our walk. After a about 100 meters we were out of the wood and into partially blue skies and sunshine and the sight of several swans stretching their wings to welcome the sunshine. Unfortunately, we were not able to capture the exact moment.



As we walked around Stover Park we could see many signs of nature waking up from the winter and by the state of some plants it was easy to conclude that some might have jumped the gun and were now suffering from the cold. Our walk took us through the park, around Stover Lake, across a small packhorse bridge and onwards to the back of Stover School.



We were now at the point where our Templer Way - Stage One walk had finished and were now in new territory having not recce'd this alternative Templer Way. On a good firm track we walked woodlands and open countryside and into the charming village of Teigngrace where, after a railway crossing we were presented with a choice, either the new Stover Way, which is a cycle track from Bovey Tracy to Newton Abbot including a dedicated bridge over the A38 or the recently renovated canal tow path. We chose to walk down the Stover Way until reaching the Graving Dock on the canal and then the canal towpath. We were impressed by the amount of restoration work that had achieved over the last two years. For more information about the Stover Canal and the restoration project see the website at [www.stovercanal.co.uk](http://www.stovercanal.co.uk). We continued along the towpath towards Newton Abbot. At the end of the path the canal was in a sorry state, but there were promising signs of the restoration to come. After passing through the Jetty Marsh Nature Reserve and crossing a major roundabout and we followed the canal to its convergence with the River Teign at the

head of the Estuary. Lunch was at the Town Quay where someone had thoughtfully provided picnic tables and chairs.

After a leisurely lunch terminated by the feeling of increasing cold, we set out on the next leg that would take us to Combe Cellars. The route took us through an industrial estate and back to the River Teign, and under the A380 that thundered overhead on a lengthy viaduct across the estuary. By this time there was plenty of blue sky showing, but we were walking in the shade and a northwesterly wind blowing from the rear.



The walk along the estuary had been timed so that an identifiable path was just visible and nearly dry and we could avoid the soft mud areas and so we made very good time to Combe Cellars and a welcome cup of tea.

With what we thought was plenty of time in hand we set out on the last planned leg of the walk to the ferry in Shaldon. Walking along the seashore, around some of the inlets that have treacherous quagmires and we reached the pretty seaside town of Shaldon. We faithfully followed the Templer Way along promenades and quaint little streets between the main road and the seashore finally ending up at the ferry point. From this point, Plan B took over. There were neither signs of a ferry nor a queue of people waiting it. A cell phone quickly established that "the ferry was not running because the strong winds made it difficult to turn the ferry". No Dunkirk spirit here!

Watches were consulted and we had 38 minutes to retrace our steps to the Teignmouth and Shaldon Bridge, cross the bridge and navigate our way along the Old Quay and a newish road system to the railway station. A short sharp shower spoiled our dry walk as we made our way to the bridge, but we made the railway station at a very fast pace, in fact with eight minutes to spare. Our walk was made complete by the journey back to Exmouth in a warm train.

A good walk all round.

***Backmarker***

***6th March 2016***