

## **Wednesday 17 August 2016, Second Evening Summer Stroll with Chris Buckland**

### ***"There's Always One!"***

Our first evening stroll in early July had been prefaced by the wettest June for 50 years, yet gave us the most beautiful summer weather; on the day of our second evening stroll, and after a fortnight of warmth and sunshine, it was humid and overcast. As we gathered outside the pub in the village of Otterton it started to rain; warm and refreshing. One or two umbrellas were raised, others enjoyed the sensation.

We set off on a familiar stroll along the west bank of the Otter; what are those several pairs of 'capstans' on the bank? Clamour Bridge provided its usual viewing platform to watch Grey Mullet, but unusually, only one, which was a portent for a later experience. Colliver Lane was atmospheric in its dankness, and then a steep hill and Lea Lane brought us to Stantyway Cross, where the shouts of footballers greeted us. Someone wanted to know why they weren't playing Cricket.

Linking up a series of paths, green lanes and minor roads makes circumnavigating the village a satisfying accomplishment, so we continued our circle along Piscombe Lane, past the Huff House to the Alpacas field, now, to Iain's disappointment, neglected, overgrown and devoid of Alpacas. More atmosphere down the tunnel that is Bredon Lane, then a short steep climb past Anchoring Farm, Barn, and Cottage to Anchoring Hill and misty views over Otterton. Who can spot the home of two local residents in our group?

But we had to move on; the cabaret would be starting soon, so we diverted across the hill and down to the River, where the expectant audience were already in their seats. The curtain rose and there it was, swimming serenely in our river; there was whispering, pointing and lenses zoomed in. We had been promised a performing troupe, but they only sent the one. No matter, for those of us who had begun to think that the story had been invented by the Tourist Board to boost visitor numbers, seeing our first Beaver was a memorable experience.

With light fading, we skipped along the riverside to the Kings Arms, where David used his celebrity status to obtain a table that the group could sit round and enjoy a sociable end to the evening. (We weren't eating, so David said he "had to pull a few strings" or else we would have been dispatched outside!),

***Chris Buckland***  
***21 August 2016***