

Tuesday 29 November 2016, The Lower Otter Valley with David Buss

"A linear walk....a sparkling day.....and a whistle"

The 10 am 157 bus from Budleigh and points along the way was abuzz with conversation as it wended its way to Newton Poppleford. There ten OVA walkers gathered and set off on what was to be a most enjoyable morning's walking.

We set off along reasonably dry paths and crunched our way through piles of freshly fallen leaves. Soon we were looking down over the River Otter and could see piles of debris which had been washed up by the recent heavy rains and strong winds.

A little further along we stopped and mused over that strange device, cogs and wheels, churning water, neatly protected by a fence. No one was sure what its actual purpose in life was. Hopefully someone amongst the walkers remembers to ferret out the truth?

Down to Colaton Raleigh and then an enjoyable walk for a while along the river bank. We had entered 'beaver country'. The beaver 'viewing site' was pointed out. We saw fairly recent evidence of their work; gnawed tree trunks, some chewed to the shape of a sharpened pencil. Our coffee stop was near the strangely named 'rickety bridge', and then we crossed it and climbed up along some ancient sunken lanes to the rear of Otterton Village, where we saw 3 grazing alpacas in a field.



The photogenic alpacha

Up then to the Stantyway football ground where we met a very friendly lady with her dog who offered to help us as we must have looked lost to her. After assuring her that we were fine the majority of us passed on to continue the walk. However, our 'Backmarker' and current joint walks organiser stayed behind to chat..... The result of this was that having walked a good way further on and having turned a few corners down a lane, someone said, 'where is he?' There was no sign. After a while one of our members then 'phoned him, not really expecting a reply, but luckily contact was made. For good measure, our leader let loose several blasts of his football whistle (one must never walk without one).



The shepherd calling his 'flock'.

Soon our voluble backmarker arrived, telling us quite impenitently what an interesting conversation he had had with the lady, apparently a former licensee of the Kings Arms Pub, and how things have changed over the years.



The 'flock' returning to his shepherd in double quick time

Time was marching on now. In fact it was lunchtime with quite a way to go. We walked down along the lanes to White Bridge and a final march along the well worn, but beautiful, path along past the mudflats and reed beds. There were surprisingly few wild

birds about despite all the remaining flood water. Back then to the Lime Kiln car park and a parting of the ways. I wonder, Susan and David, if you did manage to catch that 2 pm bus to East Budleigh?

Thank you for a lovely walk in perfect weather with good company. What more can one ask for?

Jacqui Ruhlig

30 November 2016