

Wednesday, 25th January 2017, Newton Poppleford, Joneys Cross, Stoneyford and Naps Lane back to the Otter Inn with Jon Roseway.

*Reflections on "Pop goes the Weasel"*



The day before, Penny and I had a discussion about whether we did this walk last year. The one that thought that we hadn't checked the OVA Walk Reports to find that we had done the report ... so we had done it!

*I missed a great picture of reflections by the river so this was the best that I could do ...*

Walk Leader, Jon Roseway, had gone to great lengths to detail the bus to get to The Otter Inn ready for the 09.30 start as well as the refreshment potential at the end of the walk in the pub. At 09.30, Jon addressed the assembly of 25 walkers ... he had only found out the day before that bus passes were only valid after 09.30, hence most people had arrived by car and then apologised that The Otter Inn was closed for refurbishment; however, he promised refreshments at The King's Arms in Otterton. He outlined the 8-mile walk, promised an interesting water filter, a coffee stop and that we would be back by 13.00.

The walk description was "This walk circumnavigates Newton Pop on riverbanks, footpaths, green lanes and quiet roads. We start out along the River Otter to join the East Devon Way at Harpford Bridge. Then climb gradually to Joney's Cross before descending to Stoneyford, along Naps Lane with rapidly increasing anticipation of refreshment at the Otter Inn. No steep slopes, rough ground or steps."

Chris B and I battled for the right to be "Billy No Mates", ie, back marker. This is a very serious role not to be taken lightly ... I dutifully counted Jon and the 25 walkers as we set off into the sunshine out of the car park where the frost was melting and falling from the branches onto us below. Last year's walk was called "Mud, mud and more mud", today the weather was bright and sunny with a nip in the air ... a real chance to appreciate life in wonderful company!

The first stop was to marvel at the gravity fed water filter; however, as back marker, I missed out on the scientific explanation - so here's a photo ... work it out for yourself!



***A gravity fed water filter - so how does it work?***

The group was stopped at the site of Dotton Mill. At one time there were as many as 50 watermills powered by the River Otter. Dotton Mill is known to have operated from before 1086 to closure in 1946 and in 1968 the local council ordered the building to be demolished because the wheel pit was regarded as a danger to children. The site was excavated by Channel 4's archaeological television programme Time Team, the episode "The Domesday Mill" being broadcast in 2007; the team found the wheel pit and two millstones, which were used to grind the corn. This mill is

mentioned in the Domesday Book, to the value of five shillings whereas the whole farmland and mill were valued at seven shillings. A weir diverted water to the mill's leat, supplying the vertical breast-shot wheel. Jon produced a photo of what Dotton Mill used to look like by pausing the "Time Team" programme on Youtube and doing a 'Print Screen' (clever).



*At the site of Dotton Mill*

There is some very interesting information about Dotton Mill and how an A-level student's historical investigation into the site led to the TV programme

at:[http://web.archive.org/web/20071222194847/http://www.devon24.co.uk/flatfiles/history/dotton\\_mill.aspx](http://web.archive.org/web/20071222194847/http://www.devon24.co.uk/flatfiles/history/dotton_mill.aspx)



*Dotton Mill*



Some of the group took the opportunity to marvel at the first sightings of snowdrops on the nearby bank... and photograph them.

*Dotton Mill snowdrops*

The coffee stop was at the top of the hill, on the East Devon Way, with magnificent views over the orchards. Jon took a group photo and we were off again across commons - someone pointed out that the military's camouflage was pretty good.



*Beautiful blue sky - there will be chemical spraying March - October*



*The Group photo*



*We can still see you!*

One word to the desperate - if you are going to disappear into the bushes, let the back marker know; otherwise you may not be missed. Telling someone else in the group is not good enough CB!

Dee provided a commentary on Mark Rolle's architectural style and decorative finishes to roof ridges and patterned brickwork at windows and doors at a converted barn.



***A converted barn - Mark Rolle's distinctive decorative finish at the top of the walls.***

Jon led us back to The Otter Inn by 12.55 - excellent timing. Six of us went to The Kings Arms to be greeted by a sign in essence saying 'there is no food as the kitchen is being refurbished'! Fortunately, Jon had a Plan C and we decamped to Otterton Mill for a hearty bowl of soup, bread and cake. All in all, an excellent end to an excellent walk in excellent scenery with excellent company and in excellent weather.

***Paul Kurowski  
29 January 2017***