

Wednesday, 18th March 2015, Colaton Raleigh with Mike Paddison

The accuracy of the blurb for this amble turned out to be a bit of a curate's egg. It was indeed a 'short mainly level walk along local lanes' but, 'and the banks of the Otter' was misleading. The nearest we got to the river was some way off, across the dismantled railway!

This however did not mar our enjoyment one scintilla. The clerk of the weather had laid on a beautiful, mild, sunny, apparently windless morning with only a slight haze. Although distant views of the landscape had not yet lost their wintry starkness, there were intimations of spring in plenty. We saw primroses and the green sprouts which would be bluebells; butterflies in a courtship dance (unfortunately as they were flying between us and the sun, it was impossible to identify them); catkins, white violets, occasional daffodils and a ladybird.

Our route followed various paths and short lengths of road in an anticlockwise direction around Colaton Raleigh. Although at one point we missed a turning from the planned route it was no matter as our leader knew exactly where we were and we agreed unanimously to continue in the current direction rather than retrace our steps.

We were a smallish group. Only eight of us set off from the pub car park along a path parallel to the road down towards the river. There was some speculation about why this should be. Was it that the majority of walkers regarded 3 miles of lanes as not sufficiently challenging? As we walked down towards the river, our leader pointed out a hill to our left (with a big house on it) around which we were to walk.

Where the path ran parallel to the river and then past Yonder Hill towards the main road we caught sight of a stark new concrete at frequent intervals. It's believed this has been built to enable livestock lorries transporting pigs/cattle to bypass Colaton Raleigh. Further on, as we climbed gently towards a high point of our walk, we could see a rather more elevating construction: a Belvedere in the grounds of Bicton which was built by Louisa Rolle as a birthday present for her husband. Like a few gifts in my experience (birthday or otherwise) it turned out to be of more use to the donor than the recipient. It became the home of Louisa's extensive china collection and is still known as the China Tower.

Towards the end of our walk we were given an opportunity to see behind the unusual thatched wall which is one of the more notable features of Colaton Raleigh. The wall

screens Place Court from Church Road, but we were viewing it from above and to the south, through bare trees, which enabled us to see the buildings reasonably clearly and appreciate the ecclesiastical-looking architecture of parts of the house and also a mediaeval-looking barn. After approximate five+ miles we returned to the pub for a welcome drink.

This has turned out to be rather a pot pourri of an account, if you wanted a description of the route, I am unable to furnish it - you had to be there!

Kerensa Pearson

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