

Wednesday 9th March 2016, Hawkerland & Canterbury Green with Mike Paddison

"Where is the Green in Canterbury Green"

The advertised Walk from the Otter Inn in Colaton Raleigh was "a flat circular walk mostly on local tracks. Crossing the commons to Canterbury Green and then returning via Stowford with an optional lunch at the Otter Inn."

The wind and rain of Tuesday night continued into Wednesday morning with winds predicted to be 50 - 60mph would the walk go ahead? A brief phone call confirmed that it was on! Penny and I arrived at the Otter Inn at 09.50 - there was no one else; two minutes later Andrew arrived and then Mike, Paula and Chris. This was it - the walk was really happening. Manfully holding onto the car doors so they didn't get blown off, we edged out to our first buffeting. Boots on, a brief walk description from Mike "we'll be avoiding some of the really boggy areas" and we were off.

You had to shout to the person next to you to be heard over the roaring wind. We had a brief glimpse of some of the large houses on the outskirts of Colaton Raleigh, and Place Court an ancient farmhouse with a white-washed cob wall with thatch on top together with the ladder on the wall in case of emergencies.

On one of the narrow country lanes, the four of us had got a bit ahead of Mike and Paula and stopped to wait. On turning round, Mike and Paula were in deep discussion, oblivious to the car meandering along behind them - they didn't hear our shouts of "Car" until they were three metres away! After this, Mike went to the front and picked the speed up along Napps Lane and through Stoneyford. So much for the "flat" another gradual incline took us out onto Hawkerland - an exposed common where the wind nearly blew us over! A check on the right paths and we were off again across the common and into the Mount Pleasant woods where we stopped for a coffee.

As we emerged from the woods at Canterbury Green, we noticed that a path had been remade with a firm top leading back to Hawkerland - that's one to explore in the future. Mike pointed out that there was a Canterbury Green Farm but no green in Canterbury Green. I subsequently discovered that the Canterbury Green Farm is a "Self Catering Cottage". Adjacent to the farm was Canterbury Green Ivy Cottage but no green! After a careful single file walk down the busy B3180, we were back on footpaths through Hawkerland Brakes and into the "Danger Area" on Colaton Raleigh Common - two of our team were almost blown off their feet during a brief stop for a route check. Rather than going through the fords, stream and Little Mead Copse, we went across across the Common on the higher ground, which meant continuing buffeting by the wind, passed Kingston Farm and Selwood Farm House and through Kingston onto Back Lane.

The wind had taken its toll - a huge tree had blown over in Back Lane blocking the path. We considered limboing under a two-foot gap but decided that was not advisable due to the puddles under the tree and the rucksacks on our backs. We scrambled through the hedge into a field and walked on for about 100 metres before finding a way down into Back Lane through brambles and barbed wire. We returned to The Otter Inn car park at 12.52 - eight minutes ahead of Mike's stated time!

We 'retired' to the pub for a well-earned drink and lunch: vegetable soup; brie, bacon and cranberry baguette with salad; pasta arrabiata with garlic bread; fish, chips and peas; and beef and Guinness pie, potatoes and peas. Penny and I then went to meet Chris Woodruff of the AONB in Sidmouth to discuss the East Devon Way Challenge but that's another story.

Paul Kurowski

12th March 2016.