

## Friday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2018, “Dartmoor views, Woods and a Stannary town visit” with Stella French

It was a very sunny hot day when we all met up in Ashburton carpark for the start of our circular walk followed by a historic town trail. We set out across fields and along the river to Cuddyford Cross. Once here we continued to follow the River Ashburn into the welcome shade of the woods.



After a pleasant stroll we knew the easy walking would have to change as we started to climb out of the woods along a lane towards Owlacombe Cross. Small glimpses of the surrounding hills became visible through gaps in the hedgerow and we stopped at one of these for a coffee break and to admire the views. Once we reached the road and heading back towards town we had beautiful views towards Dartmoor, when looking backwards.

We skirted around the edge of the quarry and then the South Dartmoor Community College around the outskirts of Ashburton heading for the Terrace Walk. Here to we had glorious views of the surrounding hills where we sat enjoying our lunch and the scenery. Fortunately there was a little cloud and we didn't need to retreat to the shade of nearby trees.

Refreshed we headed back down into town to change our walking boots for lighter footwear and leave any unnecessary luggage behind to start the town trail.



Ashburton is one of four stannary towns in Devon which relates to the administrative functions connected with the mining of tin on Dartmoor. It also has a historic woollen industry which had many mills along the river and a wealth of old buildings. The other main feature of Ashburton is that it has the ancient Saxon office of the portreeve which is still functioning today.



It was by now getting fairly hot as we followed a historic trail around the town noting the former gaming house, its slates carved with different suits from a pack of cards, Fish Scale house with its carved fish tail slates, the 18<sup>th</sup> Century water conduit



and across the road the former Golden Lion pub (home of the Monster Raving Loony Party until 2000).

We then headed along backstreets to the former Railway Station which has a nearby pub renamed Silent Whistle in 1973 when it closed. The St Lawrence Chapel is one of the oldest buildings and was originally a private chapel for the Bishop of Exeter. In 1314 the building was given to the town, administered by the Guild of St Lawrence and led by the Portreeve on condition that a Chantry School was maintained there. This eventually became a Grammar School then an annexe to the county and primary schools until 1994. As there

were music exams taking place we were unable to explore the inside but one of our group demonstrated the use of the stocks outside.



Next we strolled across the river noting the stone slabs on the river bed from when wool was washed here. It was by now becoming very hot and humid and we decided to shorten the walk and headed for St Gudula's Cross and well after skirting around St Andrew's Church. The cross is thought to be 14<sup>th</sup> Century and the waters in the well were said to be good for weak eyes.



We now headed back into Ashburton and the very welcome cool drinks in the Exeter Inn beer garden. This pub is the oldest in Ashburton dating from 1130 and is said to have had Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh as regular drinkers. Raleigh was arrested here and then imprisoned in the Tower of London on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 1603.

An enjoyable walk on a very hot day.

Stella French