

## Tuesday September 18<sup>th</sup> 2018, “The Path Less Travelled” with Brian Turnbull

*I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference*

[From ‘The Road not Taken’ by Robert Frost]

Tansy and Buster – two Border Terriers – waited in the open car boot, listening attentively to Brian Turnbull’s introductory briefing; they were to join the nine walkers assembled in Newton Poppleford on a mild breezy day for a five mile walk that was to be full of quirky curiosities.

Brian commenced with a reference to the nearby Newton Poppleford railway station, of which little remains since its demolition fifty years ago. Situated on the branch line from Tipton St. Johns to Budleigh Salterton (subsequently extended to Exmouth) the station was opened almost as an afterthought, over two years after services had commenced in 1897. From 1949 onwards it was equipped with two camping coaches for holiday use.

Heading north along the old track-bed, the walkers joined the East Devon Way westwards through the hamlet of Southerton where they encountered an unusual garden gate which incorporated a variety of garden tools – hoes, a banjo shovel and an assortment of trowels and dibbers.



A little further on a smouldering ash-blonde mannequin gazed dispassionately at them from her window as they filed by.



Pausing to admire a plain-tile conical roof nearing completion, Brian drew our attention to a nearby dovecote of such magnificence that it could have been designed by Lutyens himself, before leading us by a circuitous route through green lanes to Venn Ottery and its parish church of St. Gregory. Tucked away discreetly behind an inappropriately suburban housing development, the nave had at one time been thatched before destruction by fire, but the beautifully weathered Norman tower of Heavitree breccia stone survives intact.

Closing the circle on our return to the car park we passed a badger sett of magnificent proportions where the residents were airing their bedding – no doubt in anticipation of a visit from the Men from the Ministry...

Thanks, Brian.

A. L. [Tony] Venning