

Monday 29th October 2018, “Sir Walter Raleigh Anniversary Walk” with Brian Turnbull -

400 years to the day since Sir Walter Raleigh (SWR) was executed at the Tower of London 22 of us joined Brian Turnbull to celebrate his life and perhaps walk in his very footsteps.

Think what you may of him – pirate, explorer, soldier, loyal subject, poet.... SWR is almost certainly East Budleigh's most famous son.

We started with a stroll up East Budleigh High Street to admire SWR's statue and discuss the controversy about his birth date – was it 1552 or 1554? The current view seems to be 1554, when the country was under Catholic rule and according to legend the protestant Raleigh family had young Walter christened in a private chapel at Place Court in Colaton Raleigh.



Next we visited All Saints church to see the very pew where SWR and his family would have sat, decorated on the end with the Raleigh coat of arms. SWR's father Walter was a churchwarden at All Saints. The grave of Walter Raleigh senior's first wife (SWR is the son of his second wife) is in the floor of the church, and the carpet was lifted so that we could see it. All the pews in this fine old church have decorated pew ends, many of them medieval.

The final stop in the village was outside Vicar's Mead (now a private residence), formerly the vicarage. Here SWR went to lessons with the vicar. We could imagine him trudging along Hayes Lane with his school books. We too trugged up Hayes Lane for about a mile until we reached Hayes Barton, famed for being the birthplace of SWR. This beautiful Elizabethan manor house (again a private residence) was leased by Walter Raleigh senior from the Duke estate.



Brian now took us along paths, unfamiliar to many of us, to Yettington. Thankfully the road was closed for roadworks so we were able to walk up it with no fear of traffic until we turned up onto Colaton Raleigh Common where we stopped in the sunshine for our “elevenses”.

A track following the stream took us to Stowford, and onward to Colaton Raleigh. Here a real treat was in store. The owners of Place Court, Mark and Lindsay Breese, opened their beautiful gardens to us, complete with tables and chairs and a toilet, so we could enjoy our picnic lunch. Place Court is a wonderful 13th Century manor house, possibly the oldest continuously inhabited building in the area. We could see the windows of the chapel, above the porch, where SWR's baptism is said to have taken place.



Brian read us an excerpt from SWR's will, written when he was in his forties, and it gives a flavour of the man himself:

“In the Name of god the Father the sonne & the holye ghoste. Three persons and one god. The eighth Daye of Julye Anno Domini 1597 I walter Raleghe of Colliton Raleghe in the Countye of Devon knighte Captaine of her Majesties garde and Lord Warden of the Stanneryes in the Countyes of Devon & Cornewall acknowledginge that all fleshe ys grasse and that the Daye of our birthe ys the firste steppe to Death though the hower be

uncertaine when the spirt shall retorne to the lord that gave it doe ordeyne Declare & make this my laste will and Testament in manner & effecte followinge.”

From Place Court we walked along paths to the Otter, and onwards to Otterton. A lucky few spotted two kingfishers flying up river. This is good stretch of the Otter on which to see them.

Bicton Church was the last point of interest. In 1850, on the orders of Lady Louisa Rolle the medieval church was made into a planned ruin, and part of it was reworked by Augustus Pugin into a mausoleum for the Rolle family. A new church, St Mary's, was built next to it. St Mary's is now deconsecrated, and both churches can only be accessed through Bicton Gardens. Dripstones on the window arches and south porch of St Mary's are carved to represent 50 English kings and queens and their spouses.

Through the fields and back to East Budleigh. 8 miles completed on a glorious day, in good company. Thank you to Brian for all the information you imparted along the way.

Penny Kurowski