

Monday 22nd July “River Otter Source to Mouth Stage 2 - Upton to Weston” with Penny and Paul Kurowski

27 intrepid walkers arrived at the bus stop opposite Homebase in Heathpark, Honiton, ready to go to Upton. The Dartline bus arrived, its smaller than two weeks ago, and the driver refused to let anyone on as he has his ‘regulars’ to collect. Plan B swung into operation – car shuttling. It took 6 cars to get us to the start point, and we finally started the walk about 25 minutes later than intended.

This walk, whilst following the general course of the River Otter, was mostly out of sight of it on the north side of the valley. There was much of interest though, starting with the Vicarage in Upton, which had been the home of the founder of the Jane's series of books on shipping.

Our route took us along the road through Rawridge, a pretty village, before heading over fields and crossing and briefly walking alongside the Otter.



Then we left it for several hours. Walking past Otter Falls Holiday Centre we saw the artificial lakes that are apparently stocked with trout for the visitors' to fish for. We enjoyed a glimpse of Mohun Ottery which included the remains of a 16th century gateway, and then the village of Beacon with its wonderful views across the valley.



Ahead of us was Dumpdon Hill, an Iron Age hill fort. at 856 ft it commands great views and would make a good lunch spot, so we followed the track upwards, gently at first, and then a steep climb to the “plateau” at the top which had just been mown – perfect.



Then it was down to the hamlet of Wick, over the Luppitt stream, along more country roads until we reached the village of Combe Raleigh. Owned by the Raleigh family in the 13th Century, this pretty village has a couple of interesting buildings: Chantry House, a late 15th century priest's house and The Abbot's House, built in 1790, which was used as a prisoner

of war camp in WW2. But more importantly for some, the lovely 15th century Church of St Nicholas has a beautifully appointed composting toilet in the churchyard!

Inside the church there is much of interest, including a crest of King Charles II dating from 1661 and a 16th century folding wooden door.



From here it was just a couple of miles to the finish. But first we met the River Otter again, and were appalled to see that the banks were smothered in the pink of Himalayan Balsam! Some of us itched to pull it, but it would have been an impossible task.

Then up and away again, to avoid a busy main road, before following more lanes, and crossing the River Wolf, to finally arrive at the Otter Inn at Weston, our destination. The poor drivers could only look at the temptation of the bar.....they hurried back to Homebase for the cars to take them to Upottery.....thankfully they returned to collect those of us who had been slaking our thirst with soda, or something a little stronger.

Note to self – don't trust rural buses!

Thanks to all the patient walkers for your understanding on the bus situation, and for waiting while everyone tramped through gates and over stiles, and queued for the loo!

Penny and Paul Kurowski