

Wednesday 21st August 2019 'Keble's Seat' with Brian Turnbull

Thou rustling breeze so fresh and gay,
That dancest forth at opening day,
And brushing by with joyous wing,
Wakenest each little leaf to sing;

'Morning' by John Keble

Following a brief introduction from our walk leader, 15 walkers set off in breezy sunshine from Colaton Raleigh church at ten o'clock ... rather later in the day than John Keble had in mind when he penned those lines! Keble (1792-1866) was a poet, priest and theologian who gave his name to Keble College, Oxford. He was a leading light in *The Oxford Movement* which promoted high church ideals as opposed to protestant leanings within the Anglican Church. A regular visitor to Sidmouth, he drew poetic inspiration from the landscape.

After crossing the Otter at Ashtree bridge, we noted the site of Dotton Mill demolished in 1968, and the trackbed of the branch line from Sidmouth Junction to Budleigh Salterton opened in 1897 and closed in 1967, now used as a farm haul-road.

Nearby, at Pitson Farm, Brian pointed out a fine barn, part of Mark Rolle's architectural legacy, and shortly afterwards at Northmostown another Mark Rolle building now converted to residential use and appropriately named "Keble Court".



Then it was time to steadily climb the 200 metres or so out of the Otter Valley, up Back Lane to Keble's Seat on the western side of Bulverton Hill. Vacuum flasks emerged from daysacks and we shared the view over the valley that had so inspired Keble.



Tony mentioned that William Butterfield, the architect of Keble College (and another member of *The Oxford Movement*) had also undertaken the refurbishment of Ottery Church where he designed the font. Butterfield introduced the use of polychromy – the distinctive use of multi-coloured brickwork - used to pick out string courses and quoins which can be seen at Exeter School, designed two years after Keble College.

All too soon it was time to turn south on the return journey across the heathland of Mutters Moor, and descend to the valley by Passaford Lane, re-crossing the Otter into Colaton Raleigh in time for lunch at one o'clock.

Tony Venning