

Monday 4th November “Town, Tors and the Taw” with David and Rosie Conner

A round dozen of us met at Belstone car park, on a slightly threatening weather day, having driven through torrential rain to get to the start.

We set off through the village and along a lane lined with hedges covered in verdant green mosses. After a short while we turned onto a footpath, across fields with distant views towards Exmoor, and headed down to a picturesque path beside the East Okement river, walking on a carpet of leaves through woods showing fine autumn colours, below Ball Hill.



The path then forked to follow a leat to lead us to the disused Okehampton Mill and our coffee stop. Light showers caught up with us at this point but dried up for a brief spell to give us a sunny stop for refreshments including delicious cakes kindly provided by Rosie, while David gave us the history of the Mill.

Continuing through the town we follow a path beside the West Okement river past the old town workhouse, until we cut up through the woods, with glimpses of the ruins of Okehampton Castle through the trees. After crossing the bridge over the A38, we head back up towards the moor, gradually climbing to leave the town of Okehampton behind us. The track takes us through Halstock & Blackertor miniature and Shetland ponies stud farm which provides a *cute ponies* distraction for some of us on the way through.

Not surprisingly on a walk in the autumn, not only are we treated to the brown hues of the bracken and grasses of the moor, but also various fungi in the woods and fields – perhaps

most unusually fungi growing out of splits in silage bales and very small bright lemon coloured fungi beside the path.

The wet weather has caught up with us now, so after a brief pause to adorn waterproofs we continue onto the open moor with good views despite the showers, of various tors around us as we head along a wet track towards our planned lunch stop at Cullever Steps. Heavy rain means we decide to continue before stopping for lunch. As we approach Winter Tor, the cloud breaks to give us a brief sunny interval, complete with rainbows and views as we shelter beside the Tor for our lunch stop.



No sooner did we resume walking after lunch then the rain returned, but fuelled by our lunches we head on up and across the moor until we turn to make our return to Belstone along a track above our 3rd river of the day the River Taw, and past the Irishman's Wall – a wall to nowhere on the open moor !



Our return to Belstone is spurred on by the prospect of a welcome warm up, cuppa and cake in the Old School Tea Room – the perfect end to an enjoyable walk. Thank you to David & Rosie.

Jane Kewley