

Wednesday, 15th December “Wheathill, the Gibraltar Stone and Stowford” with Brian Turnbull

Thirteen walkers set off for a walk with a difference on a misty December morning. Although not walking far, we were going to re-trace some of the military infrastructure from the Dalditch Camp which was on Woodbury Common during 1941-46.

Brian Turnbull explained that there had been 5,000 men stationed in the area although the camp was originally only meant to hold 1,000 personnel. With so many men living in such a confined space, mud was a constant problem. To combat this, rubble and bricks from bomb sites in Exeter were transported to the Camp and used as road foundations.

Our first stop was at the first of three Decontamination Units built due to concerns about gas attacks. The buildings now are protected for use by bats and ‘decorated’ with colourful graffiti.



We visited several sites where Nissen huts, in blocks of four, had housed the men. The sheer number of huts and men must have been an incredible sight.

The walk included the Gibraltar Stone, which is set in the heart of the existing training area used by the Marines. The Stone was placed there in 2014 to celebrate the long connection between Gibraltar and the Marines.



A series of mysterious paths led to various firing ranges, some long range and others short range. At the 300 yard butts (where the targets were), the wall still contains the remains of sixteen target mechanisms.

We then circled round to pass one of several Dining Halls, near where the church had stood, before finally completing a circular route back to Wheathill car park.

Thank you, Brian, for an interesting, informative and atmospheric walk which was the final one for 2021.

Jane Connick