

Peak Hill, Sidmouth, 15th January 2008

The forecast of winds (very strong), with rain (very heavy) and the prospect of mud (very thick) was sufficient to deter all but the foolhardy. Seven arrived clutching the straw of the prospect of a window of opportunity from midmorning until early afternoon – and so it came to pass!

The sun shone strongly as we left the car park crossing a field (not too muddy) to the Coast Path and then down into Sidmouth. We had a good view of the walkway around the cliffs below Jacob's Ladder – battered by the waves at high tide. Mike was disappointed but the rest were relieved that he had to cross it off his route.

The route took us along the esplanade and across the ford at Sidford – closed to traffic as the water rushed down to the sea. Then a leisurely stroll along the Byes, across the main coast road and up into the valley above Sidmouth, catching sight of a deer sprinting away as we approached. We returned down a narrow gorge cut by the stream between two flat fields. It ran for about a kilometre and seemed to have its own microclimate with bright green ferns and other sub-tropical looking plants – a magical place.

As we returned to Peak Hill, we could see the clouds approaching from the West but not yet overhead. We thanked our lucky stars and Mike and Sue too for a great day.

Trevor

Postscript: I travelled with Mike and Sue and, declining their kind offer to run me home, caught the bus to the station. As I got off the rain started. In the 7 min. walk to Exwick Hill I got soaked – as I said last time, all part of life's rich pattern!

Haytor Down, 4th February 2008

After much consultation and discussion concerning weather conditions Nancy and I decided to join the group for the Haytor walk on Monday, 4th February. What a good decision! As a newcomer to UERSA, it was my first walk with the group and I really enjoyed the experience. The day dawned cold and frosty but not to be deterred we proceeded to the arranged meeting place and met up with the eleven other intrepid stalwarts and, having changed into the various necessary layers of clothing, we embarked enthusiastically. To commence with, we skirted around the lower levels of Haytor Down and joined the old granite horse-drawn tramway for a short while before proceeding uphill over various bracken tracks. We could see forever and we had magnificent views towards the coast at Teignmouth and the rolling vistas eastwards with Lawrence Tower and Bovey Tracey clearly visible. We proceeded at a good pace enjoying the intake of cold, sharp air which was like an exhilarating tonic and soon reached Yarnar Wood. However, it was decided that we should skip the walk through the wood on this occasion as it was somewhat dank and muddy underfoot and we commenced a gradual climb in the direction of Haytor Rocks. The views towards Hound Tor were magnificent and the weather continued to be kind, with only a brief shower of rain. We wended our way back down to the car-park feeling suitably smug with our efforts and wonderfully exhilarated. We will certainly be embarking on future walks with the group.

Judy Gorton and Nancy Scattergood



Hay Tor from lunch spot



Rainbow as we returned to the car park

Countess Wear & River Exe Country Park, 22nd February 2008

This short walk attracted 15 members for the start from Piazza Terracina and some enthusiasts were early enough for a pre-walk coffee.

We crossed the bridge near Trews Wear and went along the path towards Salmon Pool Lane and then on to Mill Lane eventually arriving at Countess Wear. The route was familiar to some but introduced others to an interesting area of Exeter. At the Swing Bridge we entered the Country Park and strolled across the fields for a coffee at Double Locks. We arrived as the doors opened at 11 am – lucky for the leader who hadn't even considered the possibility of a 12 noon opening time. After the break it was an easy stroll back to the Quay where the Jolly Roger beckoned some of the group for lunch. It was an enjoyable walk with dry, if not sunny, weather.

Trevor

Budlake and Sprydon, 7th March 2008

A beautiful sunny day tempted many UERSA members (including 3 new ones) to come, equalling our record number of 27 walkers! Before leaving the Killerton car park, the group recorded a brief video clip to email to John Boyle wishing him well and then set off following Trish firstly on the road to cross the M5 and then along paths at the edges of fields. The upward slope was not even noticeable and we reached Ashclyst Forest (NT) then walked by huge wonderful ancient trees with periwinkle in full bloom on the ground. Since we were so close to the edge of the wood, we had beautiful views of the rolling hills of Devon before dropping to re-cross the busy (old) Exeter - Cullompton road. I had wondered how Trish could describe the walk as having only a downward slope – but in fact the 'down' was certainly more noticeable than the 'up'! After crossing the road there was the 'short return route' option but no-one opted for that. Once on the flat and after a little road walking we returned to the Killerton estate through lovely countryside and more beautiful old trees, this time individually found in the fields so that each one's shape could be marvelled at. The bonus on our return to the car park was suddenly seeing John and Celia (Boyle) who had visited Killerton with their visitor from New Zealand!

As usual after a 'short walk' about half the group enjoyed a relaxing lunch with many sitting outside in the courtyard still enjoying the sun. The 3-4 mile walk that was originally advertised became a five-miler! No-one complained – in fact a few were quite pleased with their efforts and realised that great things are possible when you don't know that you are doing them!

Thanks, Trish, for a beautiful walk taking us to the east of Killerton.

Ruth

Shillingford and Ide, 26th March 2008

After a number of sunny days the rain arrived overnight and the portents for the morning were not good with persistent rain which was moving east only slowly. However by 10 am the sky was looking brighter, the rain had stopped and that was the last we saw of it.

Fourteen of the faithful met at the Orange Elephant; we set off across field paths and lanes in very pleasant undulating countryside occasionally crossing the A30 or A38. The route seemed rather bewildering but John seemed to know where he was going even if some (i.e. me) didn't. We had a pleasant lunch on a primrose bank with a good view of a peregrine diving (according to hawk-eye JP). We also saw alpacas grazing in the distance and a few saw a vole scurrying away.

It was a very enjoyable walk ending with coffee and tea at the Orange Elephant Farm Café and we returned home with goodies from the Farm Shop. Many thanks to John and Barbara for an excellent day out and they send their thanks to those who were not put off by the uncertain weather. We certainly seem to be very fortunate and, with so many larks rising into the sky and serenading us, spring is arriving!

Trevor



Crossing various roads ----- and the ORANGE ELEPHANT!

Beacon Heath, Pinhoe, 4th April 2008

Booted, and slightly chilly after such a splendid summer's day the day before, we assembled beside the athletics track ready to embark on our marathon morning trek, all of 4 miles, or was it 3½? We were going on a circular walk to the top of Beacon Hill and back down. We were promised mud and magnificent views, though the low visibility didn't bode well for the views.

It was my old stamping ground. I lived at that edge of town, high up and surrounded by fields, back in the early 70s, back in the time when the county show was still held there, in the Exhibition field, the very field we were standing in. It was horses and prize bulls, not athletes, that used to parade past the grandstand in those days. And we started off along the path I often used to come down, with the kids and the dog, though our route soon branched off, so we never got up to the field behind my house which was used as the overspill car park for the county show and, one memorable year, for ranks and ranks of temporary pony club stabling instead. I think it was the pony club centenary and they were presenting a "Pageant of The Horse through the Ages". There was pandemonium up in that field every afternoon, with loudspeaker announcements such as "Will all the Red Indians report to checkpoint C for war-paint and wigs" and "Has anyone seen Lady Godiva, we need her *now*." There was no need to go to down to the County Show for entertainment that year.

But, familiar territory or not, this was a new walk to me. My walks had tended to be just in the nearest fields twice a day, and sometimes across to Goffins farm to visit a friend. There is a limit to what you can do with a baby on your back, a dog and a 3 year old, and the limit is what the 3 year old can do for himself!

Yes, a lovely walk, short but relaxing, with lots to see. We found the promised mud, but not too much of it, and we found the views. The low cloud had lifted from all but Dartmoor, and we had good views in every other direction. There was even an unusual slant across the estuary to the sea (there was much more mud down there, as the tide was out). We also saw some unusual fauna, beside a church on the hill coming down. There were three alpacas, like huge cuddly toys, very friendly, and there were some beautifully speckled guinea fowl in and out of the bushes around us.

No sighting though, on this trip up memory lane, of the elusive, long-lost Lady Godiva, but, wherever she has been hiding all these years, I suspect that she, like us, is drawing her pension by now.

Ruth Butler

South Zeal & Cosdon Hill, 22 April 2008

Dartmoor in any conditions is a wonder. On a beautiful day in April it is a delight. Fourteen walkers, including the intrepid John Boyle and led by Mike and Suzanne Smith, worked their way from the depths of South Zeal and its hidden car park to the heights of Cosdon Beacon and Hound Tor. It was sunny and warm with very little wind. The heart-pounding climb quickly led to the shedding of clothing but not propriety, although Mike's knees were a distraction. The first stop, coffee break, involved a graceful homage to the gods. Mike and Leslie (Moss) conducted a dancing progress along a line of ancient stones that any Druid would envy. Then it was onto the MIRE. A series of leaps, staggers and zigzags negotiated most dangers but we almost lost one walker. Frankie, at a most dangerous spot, jumped, slipped and sank. Horrors! The MIRE is reputedly bottomless. Luckily Roger's hand reached, grabbed and held, but not without cost to himself. We moved on, Frankie with a squelch. Lunch on Hound Tor offered a chance to rest, replenish depleted energy and enjoy the hazy, almost surreal views. The return over the Beacon was less eventful but steep declines have their own challenges especially when one is distracted by circling hawks, appealing lambs and muddy horses.

It was a fabulous day and this 8 miles was a tough work-out even for fit University survivors. Mike and Suzanne are great guides, rarely lost. We look forward to their next trek.

David Moss



Firstly watch how to do it



Then do it



but that's no way to thank Roger for his help!

Newton St Cyres, 7th May 2008

Seventeen enthusiastic drinkers – sorry, walkers – turned up at the Beer Engine on a beautiful warm spring morning. It was so warm that we ambled very slowly along the Creedy with frequent stops for a drink in the shade of a tree. Eventually we reached the bridge that crossed the river near Half Moon where John B saw a kingfisher. We made a detour towards Langford crossing the railway to talk to a very friendly group of Shetland ponies. Then it was another slow, leisurely walk to Newton St. Cyres along the other side of the river, eventually arriving back (exhausted) at the Beer Engine for a relaxing lunch on the terrace.

Woodbury, 21st May 2008

Yet another beautiful day – warm with plenty of sunshine. Starting from Newton Poppleford (Newtown and Pebbleford) we took an ancient route adjacent to the strips worked in previous times heading towards Woodbury Common. After circling the edge of a number of fields, we approached the ‘danger area’. No red flags but we were soon crowding to one side to let a group of marines by – running in full kit down the slope and then back up again. They looked pretty tired having been out all night. We lunched near Woodbury Castle with fine views towards Sidmouth and the sea.

The return route followed the east Devon Way across the Hawkerland Valley, around Aylesbeare Common arriving at the ‘Southern Cross’ for a splendid tea. (Most opted for a half cream tea except Batty D who went the whole hog.)

It really was an exceptionally enjoyable day for the fourteen who joined the walk and many thanks to Sue and Patrick for organising it.



Wildlife at Pinhoe Church



Newton St Cyres approach



Yomping on Woodbury Common

Exwick, 4th June

50th Walk

Twenty-five turned up for the 50th (Celebration!) walk on yet another fine day. The route took us along the strip between the Exe and the flood prevention channel to ‘Millers Crossing’ at the Mill on the Exe. We crossed this newest bridge and explored some of the remains of the older bridges before heading back across the playing fields on the Western side of the river. We eventually reached the bottom of Barley Valley, a quiet, little known, nature

reserve and the path wound its way up for the only climb of the day to the ridge near Barley Farm. Then it was back down Exwick Lane for lunch.

Everyone dived into their sandwich lunch with a ferocity that suggested we would soon be moving on. But alas the flesh was weak and a surprisingly warming cold summer punch followed by 'impossible to resist' desserts from Sue, Celia and Ruth resulted in lunch taking two hours rather than the statutory 20 minutes.

We took a celebratory photo displaying the banner which declared 'THE BIG 50' after explaining that it didn't refer to Ruth & Trevor's golden wedding – well not for a few years yet anyway!



Lundy Island, 24th June 2008



After much planning kindly undertaken by Trevor the day arrived and the group of 25 met on the quay at Bideford, some having taken the opportunity for a mini break in North Devon the rest having had an early start. Luck of luck the conditions were perfect, hazy sunshine and no wind!

The trip down the river past Appledore, Instow, Saunton Sands etc was fascinating and interesting to see a well know area from a different perspective. Even over the bar the sea remained calm and most excitingly saw schools of porpoises/dolphins along side the boat giving us a brilliant display. The boatman said they had not seen that many at one time before, so our luck was holding!

As the boat approached the island lighthouse, church and settlements came into view, far more buildings than I imagined. Then off to walk the path up to the Tavern and Shop area for people to decide how to spend the day.

Trevor offered to lead a walk round the island and had a good group of followers. Setting off towards the South West Point across open grassland we then joined the path up the west side which has very dramatic rock formations dropping steeply down to coves with clear blue green water. Comfortable walking on dry paths took us past the disused lighthouse to above Jenny's Cove for a very scenic lunch stop. Then on to North West Point where seals were swimming and basking on the rocks below us. Looking south from here was a good view of the flat top of island with open grassland, flat rocks and pasture. Turning down the East side the cliffs were grassier with more vegetation away from the SW wind. Views from all points were spectacular with the coasts of South Wales and Devon visible. Thanks to the sharp eyes of group members, particularly John, we saw a shrew, a peregrine, a baby Soay lamb, gannets, gulls a plenty and lots of pretty rock plants and grasses. Sadly no puffins.

Wonderful to find a place that is still very much as nature intended and thanks to such perfect weather conditions we saw it at its best. To top off the day Trevor revealed that it was Ruth's birthday so we had to adjourn to the Marisco Tavern to drink her good health! Then time to board the MS Oldenburg for a slightly breezier journey back.

Thank you again Trevor for organising such a great day that will, I am sure, be well remembered by us all for a long time to come.

Sarah Stott

Quantocks, 10th July 2008

Nine enthusiastic walkers gathered outside the church at West Bagborough on a fine blustery day. It would appear that the heavy rain of the preceding days had deterred some of the regulars apart from those on grandparent duties. Although we had just seen some other people come through the lych gate it provided our first problem as we had difficulty opening it. However once we had, we wandered up through the churchyard and out along wooded paths and open fields. Stopping for a coffee break we looked out over the Blackdown and Brendon Hills. A geography lesson ensued as a map was produced and Roger pointed out that the Brendons lay between us, on the Quantocks, and Exmoor.

A steady climb through more woodland brought us out onto the top of the hills where we had an excellent view of Exmoor and Minehead to the west, the Bristol Channel, Steep Holm, Little Holm and the South Wales coast to the north, Hinckley Point power station below us and the Mendips to the east. A sheltered spot amongst the bracken was found where lunch was consumed.

Roger's democracy was displayed when we were invited to choose which path to take: either up to the high point of Wills Neck or skirting it through the protection of woodland. In spite of threatening rain clouds we braved the open ground. Reaching the trig point at Will Neck there was a discussion about how high we were. After much mental arithmetic trying to convert metres to feet we concluded that we were above 1000 feet.

Arriving at a strange lump of wood in a clearing, Roger told us that it was a magic wishing post. Everyone, with the noted exception of Roger (!), walked the required three times around it. Here again democracy occurred as we chose whether to take a steep path down to the starting point or a more gradual alternative. We chose the former.

The rain had more or less held off. In the official language of the Met Office we had just 'Spits and Spots'. Most put on and took off their raincoats once or twice but one bravely went without.

After the walk, some set off for a superb cream tea. However some others at the table viewed the writer's choice of a toasted teacake enviously.

Keith Tizzard

Exe Valley Way, Thorverton to Stoke Canon, 23rd July 2008



Brampford Speke on nearing Stoke Canon

The 53rd walk felt more like the 13th. The bus from Stoke Canon was late and I left my NEW ‘Tour de France’ cap on the bus!

Eighteen enthusiasts turned up on a very pleasant fine morning with two new walkers and we set off down the Exe from Thorverton on what should have been a straight (forward!) walk. However stimulating conversation is bad for the eyesight and we soon lost the way. Fortunately someone had been there before and eventually we got on the right track, skirting Brampford Speke before returning to Stoke Canon where the pub looked invitingly promising but was unfortunately ‘ferme le Mercredi’ – c’est la vie!

Trevor

Brixham to Kingswear, 7th August



Eight of us met at Berry Head on a beautiful morning with no sign of rain and excellent executive portaloos courtesy of a BBC camera crew! With 11 miles to complete we set off briskly in increasingly warm and humid conditions reaching Man Sands for our morning break. Now for the bad news.

At that point, one of us showed signs of heat exhaustion and decided (wisely) to turn back with a companion. A further hour into the walk, a second of us showed similar symptoms and this was compounded by a fall resulting in an injured ankle. We were in a fairly remote area with little alternative other than to continue walking, albeit slowly. We kept together until we had finished our long lunch break when the others went on while I helped Frankie to get to Coleton Fishacre to await transport. Returning to the path I chased after the others to Kingswear for a bus to get us back to Brixham.

In retrospect it was a very pleasant walk with stunning scenery and Frankie’s courage and fortitude (with what proved to be a fractured ankle) got us out of a difficult situation. My thanks to the others of the group for sorting out the transport arrangements and looking after Frankie. Not surprisingly I was a little gloomy by the end but

this was lightened by the suggestion that I might like to have a re-run in the Autumn making it less demanding by including time to see the house at Coleton Fishacre and 'do' the shops at Kingswear.

Hmm..... maybe I'll pass on that. Any volunteers?

Trevor

Christow – Tottiford Reservoir, 19th August 2008



Initially on hearing the weather forecast John and I wondered how many of the group would brave the weather and us on this walk. Gradually several cars pulled into the car park and 12 of us set off in lovely sunshine. We weren't so lucky later and we had to seek shelter for our lunch stop. Passing up through Christow village via secluded footpaths brought us to the initial climb up through lovely woods beside a stream tumbling down the hillside. On our return to Christow from Tottiford Reservoir John Boyle and Lesley Moss were lucky enough to see an Adder; such was the excitement we started to take the wrong route. Later John Boyle spotted a thumb nail size frog (a snack for the Adder). We arrived back in Christow in brilliant sunshine. One or two members of the group were impressed with the walk and will recommend it to other keen walkers. Another successful walk under our belts; thanks to everyone who came along.

John and Barbara Philipson

New Bridge, 24th September 2008

On 24th September, 9 members joined Mike and Sue on a 9 mile walk from New Bridge. Mike started by explaining that this area was a notorious haunt of pixies and local stories included one of a young boy disappearing after venturing into the wooded valley, but fortunately the only spirits we encountered were high spirits in the bright sunshine. We walked alongside the Dart to the pool at Spitchwick where we resisted the temptation of a swim, limiting our exposure to a cautious test of the water temperature with our hands. After noting the path down which we would descend, we continued past the grand entrance to Spitchwick Manor with its impressive gate lodges to start ascending a road above the River Webber, signposted to Lower Town, despite the lane clearly going up a steep hill. After passing through the hamlet of Lower Town with its unusual terrace of estate worker's cottages, we continued the steep climb to Leusdon Church, now appreciating that although Lower Town is in fact on a hill, it is considerably lower than Leusdon. At the church some of us looked inside, and although it is not one of the ancient Devon buildings it does contain a number of interesting memorial tablets, including one to an aviator who went missing while flying over the trenches in the First World War. We had hoped we might see the harvest festival display but we were just too early as the lady doing the display arrived just as we were leaving. A very convenient stepped cross in front of the church provided an ideal place for us to sit in the sun and enjoy a morning coffee and a chat, but eventually having to make the effort to continue our walk up the hill, past the pretty cottages and farm at Ponsworthy, and then to join the Two Moors Way at Lock's Gate and to continue across Sherberton Common to Bel Tor, after having a lunch sheltered from the strong breeze by the boundary wall of Primm Cottage. Although the direct route to Dr. Blackall's Drive was to the East of Bel Tor it was decided that as it was such a beautifully clear day we would make the extra effort of climbing up to the Tor to enjoy the impressive view over the wooded valley of the Dart. We then followed Dr. Blackall's Drive and continued on to Leigh Tor, where Mike reported on reading that this was the only Tor on Dartmoor which did not

consist of granite. Unfortunately the article had not identified what the rock is, so an impromptu scientific survey was undertaken resulting in various suggestions. Mike subsequently found a reference describing it as a good example of quartz/tourmaline rock. After the scientific discussion we continued down a very steep path through the bracken to Spitchwick Pool, to return along the side of the River Dart to New Bridge, on the way passing a small group on the grassy banks having a luxury champagne picnic, but unfortunately we were not invited to join them.

Mike

Dawlish Warren, 10th October 2008

Blue sky and brilliant sunshine was the order of the day for the Dawlish Warren walk. A fair size group met at the car park, and after a discussion on the near matching price of car parking and rail fare from Exeter, we set off! I spotted a seal watching us from the waves as we crossed from the dunes to the beach, and we continued around the far end of the Warren. A lone boatman sunning himself on the far beach turned out to be an ex-employee of the University, and unfortunately the boat was too small to take us all for a trip around the bay. The tide was on its way out, exposing plenty of mud flats, so the resting birds were some way off, but oyster catchers, egrets and cormorants could be seen. The views up the Exe estuary were wonderful and there was plenty of action of the golf course, as we walked back along the top of the dunes to the shops and visitor attractions. A few walkers decided to lunch at Powderham before heading homeward.

Elspeth Holmes

Exmouth & Budleigh Salterton, 22nd October 2008

The forecast promised occasional showers early morning but much brighter later. Driving along the road to Exmouth, it looked pretty dire but it didn't deter the sixteen who turned up. We sheltered in Patrick and Sue's porch until 10.40 and then set off bravely in light rain which petered out in 5 minutes and turned into bright sunshine for the rest of the day!

Sue assured me that this wasn't just a re-run of last year's walk in the reverse direction – and so it proved to be; there was little that I recalled as we followed an inventive route to the disused railway / cycle way leaving quickly at Budleigh to avoid the 'rifle range' in a cutting. Then it was across the golf course keeping heads low for flying balls rather than bullets but not low enough to avoid a branch dislodging a lens from someone's spectacles. Fortunately a diligent search recovered it and a first-aid repair was completed.

We lunched on the cliffs above Sandy Bay in beautiful sunshine with splendid views and then strolled slowly back to Chez Kalaugher for the promised, long-awaited and definitely delicious afternoon tea and cakes.

Thanks to Patrick and Sue for the splendid walk and hospitality.

Trevor

White Cross and the River Otter, 5th November 2008

Who can forget the pictures of the horrendous floods through Ottery St Mary on 30 October? The UERSA walk had been planned in this region months before so there was uncertainty as to whether the walk would be possible. Mike, however, walked the Otter paths on the Monday five days after the floods and pronounced it suitable so 18, including two new walkers, gathered at White Cross Car Park, East Hill for the commencement of the walk. Early morning greyness had vanished and the start point gave remarkable views over the valley to Ottery.

An easy walk down through beautiful farmland brought us to a path in what was obviously once a land-scaped area. The stroll through an avenue of maples in full Autumn colours with blue sky and sun was magical. We made a short detour to see Knightstone Manor, where Lady Jane Grey had once lived. It's now beautifully maintained by the Osterlund family, and the history of the Manor and photographs of the interior can be seen on their website at <http://www.osterlund.co.uk/knightstonemanor.html>.

Nearing the River Otter we had to cross a field where winter wheat was struggling to survive after the inundation and another field closer to the river where there was no hope for the wheat crop, such was the amount of water in that area. Near Ottery one of the group slipped on a muddy bank injuring a leg. Fortunately we were near the road and a Social Services Office. They provided a good Samaritan who was going to Exeter and dropped Trish off at A&E. Unfortunately a break in the leg was diagnosed.

After a picnic lunch on the west bank of the Otter, we continued through meadows, grasses flattened and muddy with fences ripped out and fences further away swathed with detritus. It was easy walking but terrifying to imagine the force of water through there less than a week earlier. On through Tipton St John and an easy climb

ending in beautiful woods to stroll back to the car park made it a great walk. Once again Mike and Suzanne had excelled themselves! Thanks, Mike – it might have been eight miles but this was one of your easier walks!

Ruth

P.S. Mike had told us that this was part of a walk around Sidmouth he had helped set up 20 years ago. An annual event known as the Sidmouth Saunter has varying lengths of 13, 17 and 25 miles, which this year had 250 participants, including 102 from local schools, introducing young people to the pleasure of walking in the countryside and as a preliminary to Ten Tors training. If anyone is interested in walking one of the routes themselves, full route descriptions are available on the web page

<http://beehive.thisisexeter.co.uk/default.asp?WCI=SiteHome&ID=8817&PageID=102607>

Tea at Topsham, 20th November 2008

Heartened by the prospect of afternoon tea at Topsham, twenty turned up on a fine day for the preliminary stroll. Fearing that we might have a few defectors if we went too close to the tea-rooms area, we crossed the railway and headed out of town towards the M5, then up a cul-de-sac which led us to the University Cricket Ground. This was a first visit for most so we admired the pavilion and pictured the summer scene (wet and noisy?).

We then joined the river at the Retreat Boatyard where fortunately the first 20 metres of path (covered at high tide) was exposed as the tide was going out. It was a pleasant stroll along the river with interesting local anecdotes from the native DB (many thanks). This included the fact that the 'Goat Walk' got its name because, on seeing the then newly constructed path, one of the locals muttered that it wasn't wide enough to walk a goat. Finally we were back at Holman Way via Bowling Green Marsh. At last the pace quickened as Mary Ravenhill scorched along leading the way to the Georgian Tea Room where half (allegedly) cream teas were very popular.

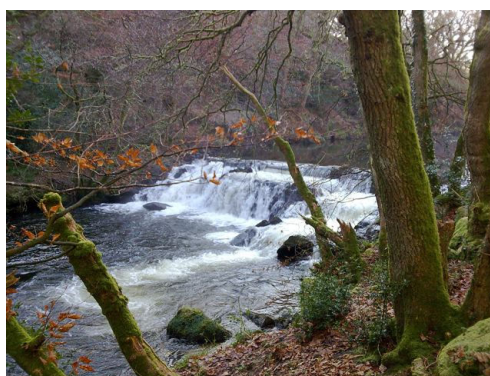
Trevor

Hunter's Path, 1st December

The end-of-year walk (on Dec 1st) took place on a stunning winter morning with blue sky and bright sun. The outward route along the Teign valley was in shadow but the frost on the trees created some magical effects and the photographers were well pleased not to say ecstatic. The group (29 – a record) divided at the bridge below Castle Drogo with a third returning along the other side of the river. The rest climbed to the Hunter's Path to be greeted by some fantastic sunshine views (cue the ecstatic photographers). We all crowded hurriedly into the Fingle Bridge Inn for lunch early enough date-wise to avoid the Christmas bonhomie and early enough time-wise to miss the promised 'Wake' for 150 people!

Thanks to John Boyle for a great walk and a great ending to the year.

Trevor



River Teign in December