

# We Love The Tamar Valley

## WEIR QUAY to BERE ALSTON 2018

Our journey to the layby at Weir Quay in Devon meant driving along roads that twisted and turned as they followed the contours of the land, a common sight here in the Tamar Valley making it impossible to drive fast. Rosy had stepped in at short notice to lead today's circular walk from here and as she too is a qualified walk leader; we knew we were all in safe hands as we set off.

The first half of this walk was along another section of the Discovery Trail so a quick look at my map showed we were heading past the modern boatyard in the direction of Hole's Hole and Hewton. When our eyes were drawn across the water towards Cornwall, we couldn't fail to miss the pink coloured Pentillie Castle standing out amid their extensive grounds. Soon the path headed inland and up through a small wooded area where after a couple of dry days, the ground was drying out nicely and we even noticed some young Bluebell shoots pushing up through the leaf mould.

Once everyone had stepped onto and then through the wooden stile with its V shaped cut out

section, we entered a field containing a flock of ewes and lambs. Although some much heavier animals had stood near the stile recently and had churned up the ground beneath our feet, Rosy said it had improved greatly since she and husband John recied the walk about a week ago. Strolling down the hill on this



sunny morning, the beautiful Tamar Valley was laid out before us with the stack on top of Kit Hill drawing our eyes like a beacon.

Right at the bottom we carefully descended some rotting wooden steps before the



Discovery Trail had us climbing

uphill again, a helicopter had been circling around throughout the morning and as we continued ahead, the men speculated whether it was checking the power lines or if it was a police helicopter searching for a criminal. If it was the latter, I am sure it had been watching our progress from above and had possibly zoomed in looking for dodgy characters!



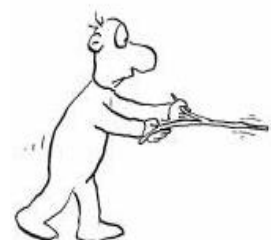




Many of the hedges bordering this footpath contain Hazel bushes/trees which had been coppiced, just as they have on both sides of the valley. Coppicing is an ancient form of woodland management that involves repetitive felling on the same stump near to ground level, thus allowing the shoots to regrow from that main stump. An un-



live for 60 or so years, but a coppiced tree may survive for 500 years! You often see these stems being used on allotments as bean poles or woven fencing, while others may use them as walking sticks. At this time of year before its leaves appear, each bush/tree is covered in male catkins and insignificant, red flowers, whilst in the autumn it bears nuts which are food to many birds and small mammals, a very useful tree indeed. Hazel twigs are even used for water-divining but I don't think we'll ever need the services of a dowser to find water here in Devon and Cornwall!



Before long we found ourselves climbing again, at some point we passed Lockeridge Farm then later beneath an arched railway bridge and many of us found ourselves flagging a bit, while some walkers were way behind, others including me were having a sneaky sit down while they caught up. At Bere Alston Rosy told us it was all downhill back to Weir Quay along the road we had driven down about two hours earlier, so on we plodded through the narrow streets thinking the walk was almost over as it hadn't seemed very far in the car.



On and on Rosy led us, while further on everyone filed across Moles Hole Overbridge according to the sign on its wall. Brian and I looked over the high wall on one side where the track way down below was running through a deep cutting on its way to Bere Alston station. Further on we were accompanied by a horse with a female rider who chatted to us as about where we had come from and where our walk had taken us and it took our mind off how far we still had to go and still that helicopter was circling around watching us as we filed past some unusual stone buildings at Cotts. At last we glimpsed the river up ahead and turned left at the junction passing the boatyard for the second time today before we reached the layby, here, those in the know said the entire walk had covered five

miles which is why understandingly; it was a **W & T+**.



