

Adrian Burns shares his journal of this year's Group One holiday to glorious Devon...

Tuesday

On 27 September 38 happy and very chatty members travelled by Daish's Coach to Torquay, briefly stopping at Bridport en route. On arrival at Daish's Devonshire Hotel there was no premeeting with our Walk Leaders, but they did provide prior information and maps of their walks.

Wednesday-Sunday (free days)

Use was made of local attractions and facilities, including Torquay's shops, harbour, beach, very undulating cliff path walks and tethered sightseeing balloon. Beyond were the historic village of Cockington, Greenway House (former home of Agatha Christie), sea and River Dart cruises, the Paignton and Dart Valley Steam Railway and Paignton Zoo, to name but a few.

Thursday (first walking day)

The coach dropped Group B off at Galmpton and continued down to Kingswear, near to the Paignton and Dartmouth Steam Railway Station, from where the long walk started. (The route was to follow the Dart Valley Trail – DVT). Group A crossed the metal footbridge nearby, which led to a footpath heading N between the railway track and River Dart, with river views. At Higher Ferry and railway level crossing, the walk left the river/road and ascended up a winding path to a level track, crossing the A379 road and continuing through Noss Plantation, around an inlet at Cart Wood and into Long Wood. At Oakham Hill the path emerged onto open farmland, falling to a lane and Higher Greenway, then west along a lane and into a field, over a grassy hill to descend towards the Greenway Ferry(#) (with a short diversion to Greenway House Gateway and back). After crossing the River Dart, there was a very steep climb to 'Lower' Dittisham (!). Branching off the lane led to a nice field, with glorious views up and down the River Dart, an ideal stop for lunch.

Proceeding across more fields, along a Lane passing Fire Beacon Hill (complete with Beacon), onto a further track across fields and into copses, the Group emerged onto a minor road at Old Mill Cottage. Another steep climb up to the A379 Road on the outskirts of Dartmouth, before an equal descent through the back lanes

led the party down to the river and ferry back to Kingswear and the waiting coach with the Stirling Moss substitute driver! (8.5 M). Group B further climbing up Blackslade Down, pausing at Tunhill Rocks and on to Pil Tor. Finally, Top Tor was reached for another stop. Heading N, led to the car park on the Widecombe Road, where a turn west followed the road steeply down to Widecombe in the Moor village, for cream teas/ice-creams and to meet the other Group and the coach back to the hotel (9.3 M).

Group B left the longer walk at (, Åç) above, to omit Rippon Tor and circumnavigate it at a low level heading S to the road. After crossing the road they turned NW to Blackslade Ford, up to Blackslade Down and onwards to Pil Tor for a lunch stop. The Group continued NE, on to Top Tor, before heading down W, passing Hollow Tor and crossing fields to reach a lane at Venton. Turning NW along the lane ending up in Widecombe. (6.5 M).

- This year we were very lucky with the weather, being blessed with unseasonal warmth and sunshine, just for the five days of our holiday.

The hotel was good, with excellent food and service and accommodating and friendly staff. Entertainment was provided by the management every night, with mainly singing, but interspersed with comedy, brilliant playing of instruments and some dancing for guests, plus the usual quizzes and bingo. Carol and her willing band of volunteers had a year off this time, not having to provide our own show, so could relax and enjoy the holiday. On two evenings, just before dinner, the fire alarms sounded (thankfully false ones). On the second event several members were having showers and had to evacuate the building wrapped in bath towels. I leave it to your own imagination as to what, if anything, was worn beneath!

It is with great sadness, that just after the lunch stop near Dartmouth on the first day's (short) walk, Laurie Tiller (aged 88) collapsed and subsequently died in Torquay Hospital. We extend our thoughts and sympathy to his partner Toni Goodley.

Thanks must go to our excellent leaders from the S Devon Ramblers' Group, namely; Chris Wood, Richard Batchelor, Bernard Parker and Les Grant, who kindly donated their expenses to the Devon Air Ambulance used in the rescue operation. Many thanks to Brian again for his efficient organisation.

(NB. M = 'Flat' Miles. Maps used were- OS OL 20 - Thurs; OS 110 - Fri and OS OL 28 - Sat.

A = Longer walk Group and B = Shorter walk Group.

left Galmpton, near the Churston Railway Station,

following a minor Road SW and then along a lane around the base of Brim Hill, across a field to traverse a minor road at the steam railway tunnel entrance and into a copse before joining Group A's route on the road down to Greenway Ferry (see# above) and thence on to Dartmouth, but with the lunch stop at Old Mill Cottage and river bridge. (5.6 M).

Friday (second walking day)

Both Groups were transported to Dawlish Warren and walked N along a main Road, then W onto a quieter lane, passing Shutterton Farm, to cross the main Exeter Road onto a narrow lane and back onto a minor road to the next junction. Here Groups A and B parted company. Group A headed N along a minor road, then finally left the tarmac onto farm tracks heading W for Home Farm. Regrettably, it was back to tarmac to head S towards Pitt Farm, then onto narrow lanes again to Langdon Copse, hence SE to Houndspool (Nursery) (\$) onto stony tree lined Long Lane. Briefly diverting, the walkers emerged onto a grassy hill top at Burrow's Reservoir for lunch, with misty views and the best bit of the walk. Descending across a few fields, then onto urban back lanes led back to the main Exeter road near to Dawlish railway station, to cross the railway and walk along the narrow 'esplanade' with a big drop to the beach to the right and *no safety railings!* (Talk about Health & Safety...) After a long trudge back to Dawlish Warren it was time for cream teas at the beach before the return journey.

Saturday (third walking day)

A longer coach journey was made to Haytor Vale Visitor Centre on the edge of Dartmoor. Group A, closely followed by Group B, set off upwards, to circumnavigate Haytor Rocks to the left, for a brief tour of the nearby disused Haytor Quarry and to view the disused Templer Granite Stone Tramway. Crossing the moor SW led to Emsworthy on to Hemsworthy Gate, (, Åç) upwards to the summit of Rippon Tor for hazy distant views (also with abandoned cheese press stones nearby), then descending SW across Halsanger Common to Cold East Cross. Continuing off-road along Buckland Common, Buckland Beacon was reached. Here, in addition to the distant but hazy views, were engraved two Tablets of the Law. Heading NW off the Common, there was a walled track. This track was to have been closed to the public by the new owners of adjacent Bowden Farm, but two female residents in Widecombe rightfully claimed ownership of the track, which has now been declared a Right of Way, much

to the relief of the local Ramblers! At Elliott's Hill Farm the route headed N onto Pudsham Down followed by further climbing up Blackslade Down, pausing at Tunhill Rocks and on to Pil Tor. Finally, Top Tor was reached for another stop. Heading N, led to the car park on the Widecombe Road, where a turn west followed the road steeply down to Widecombe in the Moor village, for cream teas/ice-creams and to meet the other Group and the coach back to the hotel (9.3 M).

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