

WRFA Walking Group

Three Day 'Out of County' Walk in Devon



The Intrepid Eight

(From left to right: Colin Hill, Roger Tombs, Phil Appleby, Pauline Murphy, Eileen Appleby, Heather Hill, Kate Vanstone and John Murphy)

A group of eight of us began our three away days making our way to our first hotel independently to avoid convoy complications of travelling together. We met in the car park of The Fountain Inn, Okehampton at 12:30. From there, we walked a short distance to a local café for lunch; slight hiccup here (purposely introduced of course!) but all was overcome.

After a pleasant lunch, we returned to our cars to travel to our first walk. Colin had changed the walk the day before for safety reasons as the weather forecast had indicated the possibility of thunder storms and the route would have otherwise left us quite exposed and vulnerable in places. Instead we travelled only about 3 or 4 miles to the village of Sticklepath where we started a delightful 4½ walk following the river Taw before rising up to the village of Belstone. The 'going' was quite challenging and tested even the fittest of us. The weather was not brilliant and we all got quite wet but we were geared up for the possibility and it all added to the fun of the event.

We then returned to Okehampton for a well-earned dinner and overnight stay at the charming Fountain Inn. I believe some may have had the odd drink or two as well!!

The following day started with a visit to Meldon Dam where the first walk was originally planned to have started from. We walked along the dam taking in the lovely views of the Devonshire countryside, a magnificent viaduct and of course the dam itself. The viaduct (designated because of its multi arches; bridges tend to be single or dual arched) was constructed to take a rail line but is now used as a cycle track.



Meldon Dam

The main walk of the day was through Lydford Gorge, a National Trust site. This, as all agreed, was a stunning walk firstly along an elevated track from one end of the gorge to the other and then back again at low level alongside the River Lyd. The river meandered over rocks forming rock pools and torrents. The river was supplemented by a number of waterfalls running into it, the last of which was 'The Devil's Cauldron'.



Lydford Gorge

It was then on to Badgers Holt at Dartmeet for a welcome break. The route took us across the spectacular views that is Devon and Dartmoor in particular, at its best (the weather this day was just about perfect, clear, sunny, warm and relatively quiet), past Dartmoor Prison to Dartmeet. The route also took us to, and eventually through Widecombe Fair which was coincidentally held on that day. We saw many Dartmoor ponies and sheep running wild. We all had the compulsory Devon Cream Tea but Colin was only able to give it a 9 out of 10 because the cream was not truly Devon clotted cream!

Suitably refreshed, we went on to Haytor where we each set our own challenges to climb as far as we wished without pressure or competition. Three intrepid climbers actually reached the summit (with Phil's assistance) before planting flags on the peak and claiming it for England. The return to base camp was made without undue difficulty.



Haytor

On then to Exeter where we bivouacked overnight, sorry, still in explorer mode; we actually stopped in a hotel for dinner, bed and breakfast.

On our last day, Colin and Heather conducted us on a walk along Exeter's riverbank, over the suspension bridge and back along the other bank. The walk then took us past 'The House That Moved', a Tudor house that was in the way during major road construction in the early 60's and so was jacked up and wheeled up the road to its present position. We saw the Matthew the Miller clock and climbed Stepcote Hill to Exeter Cathedral.



Stepcote Hill

This was where the structured 'Away' event ended as such with each then deciding to either stay and look at the shops or to return to the cars by bus and to make our independent ways home.



Exeter Cathedral

The event was a resounding success and enjoyed by all. The mix of personalities ensured lively conversation and all who attended found the outing to be interesting, a little challenging but most all, great fun!

The Walking Group meet each month (except January and February each year) for walks averaging around 5 miles. If you would like to join, please contact Phil Appleby (phil.appleby@hotmail.com) or Colin Hill (colinhill.mail@sky.com); it is a friendly group and you would be more than welcome.