

## **The OVA's Walking Holiday to Mevagissey. March 2015**

### **"LET THEM EAT CAKE!"**

#### **Day 1 - Friday Afternoon**

Fifteen OVA Walkers with high expectations, gathered in the rain, at 2pm outside Bodrugan Barton, a 19th century farmstead with a colourful heritage, about 1½ miles south of Mevagissey, on the south Cornish coast. Sir Henry Bodrugan was a brutal henchman of Richard III during his fifteenth century struggle with Henry Tudor. Eight of the group were billeted here and they were joined by 7 others who had booked their own B & B accommodation nearby. All had enjoyed a safe journey, admiring the mile long traffic jam on the A30 going north. In fact the 97 miles seemed to take just a minute, as one of my passengers managed to speak on a variety of subjects without repetition, hesitation, or deviation for 1 hour and 48 minutes!

The route took us inland to Gorran Churchtown, with a peep at the 15th Century pew ends, and an even quicker look as we passed the "Barley Sheaf", our destination for Saturday's supper. Our Leader had done a splendid job and provided a choice of three different routes to get us from Gorran Churchtown to Gorran Haven. Eventually, two thirds of the party arrived at Gorran Haven, to wait for the remainder. Well, they waited, and waited. Unbeknown to them, two stragglers, who were bringing up the rear, were egging each other on to visit the village shop to acquire essential liquid refreshment to consume at the celebratory dinner that our hosts were providing that evening. Eventually, one staggered up the hill carrying chinking shopping bags. He rejoined the group with an apology and the immortal words "I didn't think time was an issue!" But they were in time for Pat to deliver an impromptu lecture, one of several during the weekend that helped to increase our geological knowledge, and bring the walks alive. It may only have been a couple of miles home, but some of the group took pity, or maybe feared that the bottles would not survive the trip, and offered to carry some, especially as we witnessed a gymnastic tumble towards the rocks below, during which the bottles were miraculously saved. As you would expect, the owner was very generous with his swag at the dinner.

Before we got to dinner, however, we had to have tea and cakes and biscuits. They were delicious and kindly provided by the female bakers, one of whom might have said that next year the men should bake, but I don't think any man heard it. The cake became a feature of the trip and was returned to, time and again. Then the magnificent 7 departed to introduce themselves to their B. & B. before returning for Dinner. A splendid occasion in our hosts farmhouse and only marred by the absence of a Boar's Head on the table and serving wenches!

## **Day 2 - Saturday**

Breakfast at Bodrugan was the first opportunity to try our award winning chef's orange marmalade, and very good it was too. Unfortunately the poor man had to suffer the scorn of his partner, whose entry in the same competition was "unplaced". Obviously, a very bad loser.

Then it was off to Mevagissey where we all convened for the second walk of the trip. Three, who had been disgruntled that the previous afternoon's walk had been curtailed, to ensure everyone had had time to check in to their accommodation, chose the permissive path through the Farm to the coast and raced to the meeting point. It was raining!

We headed off towards Heligan and along the Pentewan Valley to Pentewan. Here, the grown ups enjoyed lunch and bonhomie in The Ship Inn, while our little one stayed outside playing on the swings, with a bottle of lemonade and a packet of crisps. After lunch the rain stopped and the sun attempted to shine as we climbed back to the cliff top, ready to return along the coast path to Mevagissey. At last, the veil had been lifted and we were able to look south and anticipate Sunday's walk, some five miles across St Austell Bay to the towering Daymark on Gribbin Head. How different conditions were going to be over there next morning!

In just a couple of miles of hilly coastal walking we would be in Mevagisey, so what better than to have a cake stop overlooking the harbour. Then down to the village; a little exploration, ice creams, deciding whether to put in an offer on the public toilets that were for sale, and dispersal to our various habitats. The disgruntled three, again took the scenic route to Bodrugan, although perhaps without the same spring in their step. More cake on arrival!

The entire group reconvened at the Barley Sheaf at Gorran Churchtown for supper and a very convivial evening it was, aided or abetted by a popular music combo! I watched as each of our party queued to pay for their meal and took my leave, grateful for a lift back. Some time later, sinking into a luxury, all enveloping leather armchair, musing on a splendid day, I was disturbed by loud voices coming up the stairs. Apparently, there had been an incident at the pub after I'd left. The police had been called, they said, and some of our group had been detained pending the payment of a bill for a dish containing three fishes? Sadly, those very same people, who only hours before I had been prepared to trust with my life as we edged along slippery, cliff top paths, were now ready to crumple and reveal my culpability as the non-payer of the OVA. To add to my shame, incestuousness is still rife in this part of mediaeval Cornwall. The owner of the Barley Sheaf is related

to the owner of Bodrugan Barton and after surviving a night in fear and trepidation, expecting my door to be broken down at any moment, I duly dropped to my knees in front of our host next morning.

### **Day 3 - Sunday Morning**

I survived and no time to dwell. I ignored the smirks of my colleagues, packed, and thanked our host for our excellent stay and his clemency, and we made our way north along the coast to Polkerris, for the start of our last walk. There were two groups, destined not to meet at the halfway point. Alternatively, there was Cornish coastal walking at its best: a high and exposed headland, strong winds and crashing waves on the rocky shore below. Hanging on to each other at the Gribbin Tower, before running down with the wind on our backs to the sanctuary of Polridmouth cove and all things Daphne du Maurier. Truly atmospheric.

A skip and a hop and everyone were ensconced in the Rashleigh Inn on the beach at Polkerris, for lunch and our last get together. What a memorable three days we had enjoyed. The weather didn't matter. We came to walk and because of our Walk Leader's meticulous planning, we could relax and enjoy the challenge. We came in a group and because of everyone's willingness to put the needs of the group before their own, the group gelled and excelled. We expressed our sincere and huge gratitude to Rosemary, with a gift of her favourite tippie, acknowledged that behind every great woman there is a great man, and that was it. Some, who had elected to stay on, watched the waves subside, while the rest of us headed back, until the next time the OVA go away!

**Chris Buckland**  
**12 April 2015**