

Thursday, 14th May 2015, A Scenic Walk up and down around Seaton, Beer & Branscombe with Ted Swann

"When is a Hill not a Hill?"

What a difference a day makes! Twelve hours after Wednesday's sunny, spring weather, we awoke to unrelenting wind and rain, which is why we remained ensconced in our cars until 09.59! When we emerged, there was little to see from the lofty height of Seaton Tower, but Ted was happy because he wanted to test the efficacy of the recently reproofed coat that had served him so well for 25 years!

We headed south, downhill through Couchill Farm, on a figure of eight route that would take us to Beer, then a climb up the coast path to Beer Head to admire the Roman remains underfoot, while looking in vain for a glimpse of Portland as it drifted in and out of view behind rain clouds. You will be reassured to know that we drunk coffee. (See the report of our walk on 24 April). Down now through the Under Hooken, which will have to suffice until the Undercliff reopens, then back up through the shanty town of cliff side holiday chalets to look down on Branscombe Mouth. Bets were taken as to whether the beachside café would be open; it was and, displaying commendably flexible decision making (he was out voted 2 to 1), our leader agreed that we should stop for a pot of tea. So, within a fortnight our walks had gone from creating history by dispensing with 'coffee' breaks altogether, to having two before twelve o'clock!

Only one way to go from sea level, so up we climbed through the village past Little Seaside and Great Seaside and the steep Stockham hill, on top of which we sat under a dripping tree to eat our lunch. Ted remained dry.

Up high, and easy walking along the green lane known as Mare Lane, before our next descent through paths and alleyways, to return once more to Beer; the crossing of paths on our figure of eight course. Gradually and grudgingly the rain abated. Ted's coat had passed the test and was dispensed with.

Going north and inland, we passed the permanently collapsed coast path to Seaton and up a delightful but unnamed wooded valley side. "The last hill of the day", said our leader. This was greeted with a degree of scepticism and he was invited, but declined, to retract this statement. "Be it on your own head", we said. Soon enough, on a walk of regular ascents and descents, another incline was felt. However, it was decided, charitably, that this would be designated a 'slope' and not a hill, so that Ted

was able to retain his integrity.

As the top of the Tower was sighted and we reached the summit of Seaton Down, the mist lifted and the sun shone on the most majestic view of Seaton and the Axe Valley laid out beneath us.

Thanks Ted for eight miles of interest, variety, and lots of hills, and the odd slope or two!

Chris Buckland
16 May 2015