

Saturday, 9 January 2016, Squabmore, Byestock Fishponds with Steve Haggard

“SEASONAL SLOTHFULNESS”

Traditionally, the first walk of the New Year is eagerly anticipated and draws a good crowd, keen to reject seasonal slothfulness and enact new resolutions. The weather can be relied upon to be clear, crisp and sunny; inviting even. As we know, that was then; even in East Devon, the weather has been far from traditional, with excessive rain, wind and high temperatures; uninviting for some. Nonetheless, eight walkers followed their leader out of Knowle village under heavy showers and benign temperatures. The gales did not arrive until we were safely ensconced in Knowle’s latest reincarnation of its village pub, to be known again as the Dog and Donkey. First we had a couple of hours enjoyable walking ahead of us.

Dalditch Common, Squabmore Reservoir, where all the fishermen and women were in their tents, lots of mud and running water that did not come over the top of one person’s wellies, and then we were at beautiful Bystock Ponds. Reminiscences of Terrapins and frozen lakes.

Before we had begun the walk, proper planning had determined that unusually, the four men in the group would occupy the seat during the coffee break at Bystock. On arrival, however, our illustrious leader and his lovely assistant, made themselves comfortable, and the rest of us whimpy men and women, knowing our place, had to stand. At that point, the rain came down.

Our return on this figure of eight course, took us past Dalditch Farm, where we encountered another innocent walker who had the good sense to inquire of us who we were, where we had been, where we were going and our place in the universe. In response we gave him our very best recruitment power point presentation, and sent him on his way after he had promised to post his enrolment forthwith. Ian said we should not have released him until he paid up. Meanwhile, the rest of the group sheltered under the viaduct of a million bricks.

Now, salivating along Dalditch Lane to the pub, where they had opened their kitchens especially for us, and we spent a typically OVA sociable end to the walk; the Carrot and Coriander soup was popular.

Thank you Steve for kick starting our new programme with an old favourite.

Chris Buckland
14 January 2016