

Wednesday 17th February 2016 - Templer Way, Stage 1 with Mike Paddison

The Magnificent Seven

Late morning. Seven of us adjusted our hoods and piled out of the people carrier into driving rain. We crossed the road from Haytor Visitor Centre and advanced up a saturated moor land slope.



Ahead and above, Haytor Rocks, massive and wet, loomed in the drifting mist.

Striking north across the moor a member of the group suddenly broke away, setting off at a tangent into the mist to the anxiety of the remaining six who were relieved and a bit 'miffed' to discover the unilateralist five minutes later a hundred yards ahead on the path. Further on the rain eased and the mist lifted to reveal the distinctive granite setts of the Templer Way tramway snaking across Haytor Moor. Arriving at the Templer Way marker stone the group felt it prudent to have a photo taken to prove that we hadn't turned round and gone home.

A group of bedraggled Dartmoor ponies expressed no interest in us at all.



[Constructed in the 1820's the granite 'tramway' was a formidable engineering feat relying on gravity and a gentle downward slope for the transport of quarried granite in horse drawn trucks to the canal at Teigngrace and then to the coast for export.]



Continuing along a gentle downhill gradient the tramway entered a beech lined 'green lane' to contour spectacularly along the south eastern edge of Yarner Wood, magnificent even in the falling rain with a vista of tree tops dropping sharply into a deep valley to the north west.

We emerged from Yarner Wood into high pasture and mixed woodland, the granite setts playing host by now to a continuous downhill stream of water, albeit still providing a firm base underfoot. This changed dramatically when we parted company temporarily with the tramway to negotiate our way around the glutinous edge of a large apple orchard. The orchard was established relatively recently to experiment with varieties of Devon apples and is celebrated for nationally rare lichens.

Emerging briefly on the road we then turned onto a passable footpath through the edge of the settlement of Brimley, passing garden sheds, a chicken run and an impressive tree house. We called a halt for lunch at benches overlooking a duck pond. The rain continued to fall and a member of the group, (the author), offered to sing to keep spirits up. This offer was wisely declined.

Fortified by warm drinks, food and an easing of the rain, we set off along a minor road, invaded by rivulets from the neighbouring fields, to eventually enter Stover Country Park where we stopped for the final refreshment of the day.



Here firm surfaces ensured our rapid progress through conifer plantation and scrub birch to arrive at the bus stop for our return journey. Perversely, the rain stopped completely at this point to reveal quite an attractive sunset.

Unannounced bus cancellations then obliged the group to demonstrate considerable ingenuity to get back to Exeter, fully justifying the title - the magnificent seven!

Many thanks to walk leader, Mike Paddison, for pre arranging the outward bound taxi pick up from Bovey Tracey and the accuracy of his navigational skills guiding us through a fascinating walk in challenging weather.

Mike French.

19th February 2016