

Saturday 2nd April 2016, Welcome Mouth to Hartland Point with Mike Paddison

Part I Welcome Mouth to Hartland Quay

After breakfast, fifteen walkers set off from West Woolley Farm in five cars towards Welcome. Ten walkers were driven to Mead and walked down the rough track to Welcome Mouth. Unfortunately it was raining, with a strong wind, so the walkers sheltered in the lee of a bank, awaiting the arrival of the drivers who had left the cars at Hartland Point.

The first challenge was to cross the Strawberry Water (which, after all the rain, was in spate) on some large stepping-stones. The second was to scale the cliff. The beach looked very dramatic from above with dark grey sand, white foaming sea, gigantic waves and sharp black pointed rocks running at right angles to the shoreline. The climb from Welcome Mouth was very steep, narrow, muddy and tricky in the wind. On our way along the clifftop we passed some extremely interesting rock formations, folded and vertical strata and sheer black cliffs. The path dipped up and down into little hanging valleys with streams and we noticed that the flora was different to our walk the previous day. At one point the path was diverted due to a recent cliff fall. The rain finally stopped when we reached Spekes Mill Mouth, where the waterfall (the highest on the SWCP) was a magnificent sight, surging over the rocks towards the sea. Now that the weather had improved we saw swallows and heard skylarks singing and we really felt that it was Spring! The buildings of Hartland Quay suddenly appeared and the group took a break for a pub lunch or picnic overlooking the sea. The tide had come in during our walk and watching the huge waves crash over the rocks was exciting. We decided to leave the walk here to visit St. Nectan's Church in Stoke but our indefatigable friends set off uphill again for the last three miles to Hartland Point.

Rosemary Hatch
14th April 2016

Part II Hartland Quay to Hartland Point

Fortified by food and drink, consumed while enjoying views of or from Hartland Quay, we set off keenly to cover the last three miles. The sun almost shone and we strode out across the green sward, past sheep grazing beside a ruined tower, through whose arch we viewed Hartland's distant church.

We soon had to drop down to cross the Abbey river. The climb back up was a steep one but we felt our goal could not be far away. That was probably when we asked Ian and Dee (who'd

done the walk before); "Is that the last steep climb or do we have to go up and down once more?" Their answers were non-committal! Sure enough, it was not once more, but another three times that, no sooner had we reached a high point, than we had to descend into another valley.

And then there was the mud! It had rained all morning, after all. Still, we were entertained not only by Chris doing his usual tumble, but also by Peter, a relative new-comer to the sport of covering your backside in grime. And he did it so elegantly!

Still, the sea views and the Atlantic rollers, not to mention the unusual geological features made it all worthwhile. We reached Hartland Point with its lighthouse and views North to, some of us thought, the coast of Wales. And were very glad to see the cars which would take us back to West Woolley for tea and cakes.

Jean Quinn

6th April 2016