

Monday, 4th April 2016, Bude to Widemouth Bay and SWCP return with Rosemary Hatch

"Bude Canal Walk"

The West Woolleyers gathered in Bude for the final walk of the official long weekend that promised something a bit flatter along the canal side - heaven for knees that had been through the mill on the previous few days.

We resisted the temptation to hire kayaks and paddle down the Canal and even turned our noses up at a pedalo ride in a large black or white swan and set off on foot.

We headed off against the tide of dog walkers eventually crossing the canal at Roddsbridge over a low bridge that would have made navigation with a loaded barge tricky.

The canal was built to transport sand and seaweed, used as a soil fertiliser, to Launceston 20 miles away. The original plan had been to link the Bristol Channel and English Channel by canal but this was abandoned with the arrival of the railways. The canal now ends at Helebridge so there is no through navigation and we did not, therefore, have any entertainment at the lock gates.

At Helebridge we left the towpath and headed up a moderate hill across fields to Widemouth Bay. Fellow walkers could not be persuaded to stop for a coffee so it was a long hike for a comfort stop in Widemouth itself. It did not strike me as a hot holiday destination but plenty of others were enjoying the beach and surf so each to his/her own.

We then headed back to Bude on the SW Coastal Path although on more moderate inclines and, to some extent, less spectacular scenery than we had seen on previous days. There were still some good viewpoints along the way at Lower Longbeak and Efford Beacon and the visibility was good enough to see long distances either way. We ended this stretch of the SWCP at Compass Point in the octagonal structure that provided respite from the shower that passed over.

Needless to say we then headed off to the nearest pub for a tasty lunch before some of the revellers headed for home and the remainder back to West Woolley to continue with their holiday.

Many thanks to Rosemary who researched and led this enjoyable walk and gave us a summary of the places of interest we would be passing.

Vivien Insull

14th April 2016