

Monday 6 June 2016 Devon's Coast to Coast, Stage V with Chris & Mike

DUNSTONE DOWN TO CHAGFORD BRIDGE

Let's start (and end!) with a word of thanks to those with large cars and who are prepared to drive to Dartmoor and initiate the ferrying between the start and finish points of the walk.

The day started cool and calm as we headed north from Dunstone Down, with imposing views in the foreground to the east, of Honeybag, Chinkwell, Bel Tors and Bonehill Rocks, while Haytor maintained a brooding presence behind them all. Soon we began the deceptively long, two and a half mile climb up Hamel Down, waymarked by a series of Bronze Age burial mounds, all conveniently identified by inscribed stones, installed by the Duke of Somerset in the mid-nineteenth century. The spirits were further lifted by seeing some 30 school children and their teachers ahead and overtaking them!



Onwards, past Hameldown Cross to reach the great height of Hameldown Tor at 529 metres (Haytor is 'only' 457m.), with everyone in good spirits as we looked down on Grimspound, and the stepped climb up Hookney Tor that awaits opposite.



To the west the isolated miner's watering hole since 1845, The Warren House Inn is conspicuous and tempting, so near but so far.



Grimspound is arguably, Dartmoor's finest prehistoric settlement, dating from 1300BC.

We paid our respects and took advantage of the owner's absence by sitting on a round house wall for coffee.

Round Birch Tor and down to Bennett's Cross that dates from the 13th century and



marks the line of the original track across the moor.

Now, up through rough ground mine workings to gain Hurston ridge and a welcome slow descent to the prehistoric double stone row, where we sacrificed our lunch.



Easy walking across Chagford Common, with a distant view of that great bulk of granite that is Kestor Rock, silhouetted on the horizon to the north-west, brought us to the satisfying end of our journey across the high moor. At which point Mike chose to point out that we had not left enough cars at Chagford to get us back to the start! Immediately some other know-alls chirped up that they too, had thought the same, even as we were making the journey to Dunstone, but decided not to say anything?! Read on for the resolution.

Just three miles to go: markedly greener and wetter, along boardwalks, through fields, tracks and woods, past isolated farms and small clusters of cottages with "C2C" way markers allowed, showing us the route. For a short section the Two Moors Way incorporates some of the Mariners Way, developed in medieval times to enable sailors to seek work in Bideford or Dartmouth. Today, in warm sunshine, the path delivered a botanists' delight! Cameras beeped, while brains could be heard mining their deepest recesses for clues to identification. Great drifts of Purslane, like bluebells (of which there were still a few), covered the woods in a pink froth. There was Bugle and yellow Poppies and Red Campion and so



many Orchids, challenging recognition.

A nod to Gidleigh Park and expressions of incredulity at the reported cost of a night in one of its four poster beds, before a deep wooded crossing of the South Teign River at Leigh Bridge and a brisk walk along the lane to Chagford Bridge, bestriding the River Teign itself. We would be back, of course but for now the race was on to summit the nasty sting in the tail: a three-quarter mile uphill to reach the promised tea-rooms (opened especially for us!) in Chagford. Our glow of achievement was all the brighter, albeit somewhat mystifying, to learn from our

colleagues with their global gismos that we had walked 11 miles, and not the 9 ½ stated in the Guide!

Finally. Some of you will recall that in the sixties there was a fashion for seeing just how many people could be crammed into a telephone box (remember them?), or a car. So some were able to roll back the years as they tiered in Mike's car to get everybody back to Dunstone!

Chris Buckland
10 June 2016