

Tuesday 19th July 2016, Brian Gannon's Devon Wildlife Trust Walk from Bystock Ponds to Hayes Barton

For me this was a record...only one other walker, apart from Brian Gannon, our leader, and me. And that person was, only one guess allowed...our walks joint mastermind. It just so happened that this particular day was the warmest yet this year in the UK, and this probably accounted for the low attendance. All I can say is that those who remained in the cool of home missed a beautiful walk.

We left the car park and walked down heather banked paths to the Bystock Pools, where we were lucky enough to see a terrapin reclining on a tree trunk. We met a nature lover and keen photography enthusiast, wearing around his neck one of the largest telephoto lenses I have seen, who kindly took a photo of us with Brian's camera. Then on to Squabmoor Reservoir, where there were surprisingly no fishermen in residence, perhaps the heat had deterred them too. But there was plenty of birdlife and various types of dragonflies about which Brian showed a wide knowledge.

On the way we admired some marvellous sea views and then descended to East Budleigh where we had our picnic on the lawn next to the village hall and enjoyed the luxury of a slightly wobbly wooden table.

After this, suitably refreshed, we made our way up the hill past the large malodorous pig farm, and past Sir Walter Raleigh's Hayes Barton, and then up to the Common again.

At one point, overlooking the Blackhill Quarry, we came upon another local nature lover, installed in his camping chair, who greeted us and said he had been sitting there for some time on the look out for various types of butterfly, as recommended by a family member who had been lucky enough to spot them a few days earlier. He himself had had no luck and obviously welcomed a chat with us. After a short stop with him we then pressed on, water bottles getting low by now in the heat of the afternoon. We welcomed the shade provided by the beautiful woods until we finally emerged back at the parking area. It had been a lovely summer's walk, which was rounded off for me at least by seeing a grey squirrel sitting happily in the middle of Wright's Lane, not a care in the world.

Thank you, gentlemen, for your company and to Brian for leading us.

Jacqui Ruhlig
23 July 2016