

Saturday 30th July 2016, Devon's Coast to Coast, Stage VIII with Chris and Mike

MORCHARD ROAD TO WITHERIDGE

Today was billed as a green transport day using the local railway and bus network for our eighth stage of our Coast to Coast from Morchard Road to Witheridge. The writer cheated and drove to Exmouth due to the unreliability of the return bus transport.

So 11 of us gathered at Exmouth station for our one hour train journey to the start, so far, so good. We were expecting to see a 12th walker but he didn't materialise unless he had morphed into a lady who was busily reading her maps when we got off the train and who we assumed walked in the opposite direction to us.



The walk crossed abundant hilly farmland, trackless and pathless fields and wooded combs. Early on, we spotted a large hunting bird flying over and landing in a tree.



We passed a few alpacas who were interested in our presence.

The next animal encounter was a herd of sheep who came galloping and leaping up in the air out of a barn in front of us after presumably having just been milked!

We walked through a field of cows with their calves and when we were all safely over the stile, we spotted and heard the bellowing bull who was definitely the boss.



Photographed against a very dark sky, he looked rather threatening. Later, we encountered a field of young bullocks who were curious but no problem.



Our guide book states that we reached the half way point of the whole trail at Morchard Bishop, a pretty little village where we stopped for coffee. However, I would disagree with this statement as we now have approximately only 40 miles left to walk in 4 sections out a total of approximately 117 miles.



We passed a few very pretty houses and a colourful rectory as we approached Witheridge, a sleepy village where we had ice treats before catching the bus to Exeter, or so we thought.

Unfortunately, the bus had a mechanical fault and we were fortunate that the bus driver managed to limp into Tiverton where we had to wait for another bus to return to Exeter and made our separate ways back either by train or bus.

The weather was kind and we enjoyed views of Dartmoor behind us and Exmoor in front of us with more adventures to come. Thanks to Chris and Mike for organising the walk and Paul and Graham for acting as back markers in turn and closing abundant gates at different parts of the ten mile walk.

Heather Fereday
31st July 2016