

**Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2015, Colmer's Hill with Vivian Insull**

***"Colmer's is Watching You"***

Six of us met up at Newton Pop for Vivian's 'Assault on Colmer's Hill'. Vivian graciously volunteered to drive the ladies team and our shorts-clad Walks Co-ordinator chauffeured the gents team. Chris has an interesting driving style - one hand on the wheel and the other hand waving around to emphasise whatever he's talking about, maybe he has some Italian ancestry (fact: Italians can't talk without gesticulating).

We re-grouped at Higher Eype Service Area (Stop 1) where Vivian explained that our main goal was lunch on top of Colmer's Hill, the perfectly rounded hillock topped off with Scots pines that will be familiar to anyone who has driven through Bridport on the A35. She also promised us plenty of refreshment stops, the greasy spoon in the parking area being the first. It narrowly escaped 'null points' for its so-called coffee and received one point simply because it only cost a quid.

The path started off through chin-high nettles and hanging brambles but soon changed to open meadows with sea views as we reached Down House Farm (Stop 2), where we booked our cream teas for later in the day, but resisted sampling the goods beforehand. We continued through the charming hamlets of Lower and Higher Eype before safely crossing the busy A35 to reach the peaceful haven of Symondsburry, where the Estate has recently opened a very chic café (Stop 3) adjoining an enormous Medieval tithe barn, all sympathetically restored in mellow Dorset stone (fact: a local variant of Cotswold Limestone). The café scored 9 out of 10 points only being penalised for failing to provide us with umbrellas outside when a rain shower passed over.

Contrary to their previous policy, Symondsburry Estate is now encouraging walkers to climb Colmer's Hill and, as a quid pro quo, spend money in their café/shops. This hill is steep-sided but not a killer climb and the top (125 m) was soon reached.

*an iconic view of Colmer's Hill*



Lunch (Stop 4) at the top provided good views given the misty conditions and a tinge of smugness at the thought that we were probably the only OVA members to have bagged this summit. As we sat under the pines, we were rained on not by water but by money spiders abseiling down from the trees in their thousands (was this a sign that we should all buy lottery tickets?). Back down the hill and along Hell Lane, not red-hot and ringing with the anguished screams of sinners, but cold and

muddy with only the rare cry of a walker sliding on the slippery stones in this ancient and atmospheric sunken lane.

*“eyes front and say cheese”*



***pix by stella***

Just before reaching North Chideock, we took a path across open fields and encountered a large wooden cross erected in memory of seven 16th century Catholic ‘martyrs’ and also marking the now bare site of Chideock Castle that was razed to the ground in 1645 during the Civil War. In Chideock, we went back across the A35 and continued on to the sea and the conveniently situated Anchor Inn for refreshments (Stop 5), including excellent coffee and friendly service. There followed a stiff climb up Doghouse Hill and then Thorncombe Beacon (150 m). It could have been clearer, but the haze added an extra something to the distant views. It was all downhill from there, as they say, with a delicious two-scone cream tea at Down House Farm (Stop 6) giving us extra momentum and one of our

group her sixth cup of tea for the day. We were back at the parking area (Stop 7) by 6 p.m. to find that the greasy spoon was closed - fortunately. The Stop-Go theme of the day resulted in an average speed of 1.1 mph and a net gain in calories, but was well worth it. Many thanks to Vivian and her assistant Chris for putting in the many hours of planning that made this walk so successful.

***Jon Rosway***

***12 June 2015***