

Saturday, 4th July 2015, South Dorset Ridgway with Bettina Wilson

'Dorset Delights'

As we approached Abbotsbury temptations for an alternative day out were everywhere- subtropical gardens, "baby swans" (aah, but cygnets to you and I) and a honey coloured tea room on every corner. The latter was clearly only a matter of delayed gratification. Nobly, we stuck to our plan to go for a 9½ mile walk, after all we were hardy OVA walkers in Hardy country.

So it was that we followed the signs to White Hill onto the South Dorset Ridgway, an ancient route from Neolithic times running between West Bexington and Osmington Mills, all the time hoping that the cloud rolling in off the sea would clear to bless us with commanding views. None-the-less we enjoyed a brisk and bracing walk along the ridge, stopping from time to time to examine ruins whose purpose has been lost along with the roofs.



The low cloud jinx (the superstitious amongst us could be forgiven for thinking this was connected to there being 13 walkers) was with us to the end of our high level walk, just occasionally teasing us with a glimpse of what we might see. As we approached West Bexington the cloud did indeed clear but we bravely ignored the injustice and strolled down the hill to the sea and a beach picnic.



The sun shone gloriously as we returned along the coast path past East Bexington and towards Abbotsbury. Over the fields the map shows the intriguingly named Labour- in-Vain Farm perhaps signifying past trials and tribulations.



Above Abbotsbury we packed in one more hill so that we could visit the ancient Chapel of St Catherine, the patron saint, we were reliably informed, of maidens and spinsters who might be looking for a husband. Supplications from the single ladies present were not forthcoming. We did, however, soak up the peaceful atmosphere of a long standing sacred building where monthly services are still held.

Then we skipped down the hill and into the Old School House now a tearoom where we were not disappointed with the cream teas and cakes on offer, an excellent choice to end a varied and enjoyable day. Many thanks to Bettina for taking us to very enjoyable pastures new.

Viv Insull

15th July 2015