

## Thursday 12 May 2016, Beer and Branscombe Mouth with Ted Swan

### **"A FAMILIAR STORY"**

You may remember that when I reported on this walk in 2015, I described the rain and mist that greeted us at the start at Seaton Tower, and the complete absence of views from this lofty perch. You may also remember that Ted chose that occasion to test his then recently reproofed jacket, which he had possessed for twenty five years. This year the weather was identical, although Ted's jacket is now twenty six years old and remains waterproof, as he was able to demonstrate.

Our figure of eight (mile) route took us down to Couchill Farm, the scene of a dog attack on our Leader on a previous visit. We scuttled through the farmyard, while the dogs barked; those less intimidated dallied to "ooh and aah" at the sheep.



On across expansive hillsides, one of which "had been felled for match sticks", quietly past mother and foal a week old, its owner informed us, and into the quiet, off season attractiveness of the seaside village of Beer.

Soon off again, uphill towards the exposure

to be endured on Beer Head, and, as the rain got heavier, Iain's optimism that it would stop at 10.30am increased proportionately. He was right, but had overlooked the possibility that it would start again at 10.35am. Over the top, past the remains of a Roman settlement, now teetering on the cliff edge, and then merciful relief from the elements, (Ok, so I was in shorts, but it is summer.) as we dropped down through the Underhooken, protected by the canopy of chalk capped sandstone cliffs. We saw an old quarry cave entrance, now suspended halfway up the cliff face, and heard unsubstantiated talk of soaring Kestrels.

At last, sunshine and sustenance at the Sea Shanty, a prerequisite for the steep, slippery and sweaty climb out of Branscombe, up the 140 metres ascent of Stockham's Hill.



Our return to Beer, elicited abortive attempts to push down closed shop doors in pursuit of an ice cream. Finally, gratification was achieved by a walk down to the beach café where Duckys duly delivered, although first choice Blackcurrant and Cream was not available. Another nearby purchase was for expensive, fresh scallops, although somewhat prematurely, before a rumour (unsubstantiated) that said scallops were about to be reduced and sold off at an 'end of the day' price.

The only way out of Beer is up, so we did, soon gaining the gently sloping tarmac cliff path down towards Seaton Hole, past a contemporary, 'statement' residence, with far reaching views to Portland. I wonder what they think of it on Portland.

The last of many hills took us back to Seaton Tower and the stunning view of the Axe Valley that had been denied us at the start, some five hours earlier. Thanks Ted. Third time lucky with the weather in 2017.

**Chris Buckland**  
**17<sup>th</sup> May 2016**