

## Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016, "Exploring the Western Front" with Chris Buckland

### *"I'm Walking Backwards to Christmas"*

The lady doing the speed checks came to the OVA group assembled in the Knowle Hall Village car park. She said that she was responsible for the Village Hall bookings and hence the car park; I placated her by stating that we had checked the bookings to ensure that we would not interfere with others.

Chris introduced the walk by stating that we would be doing it backwards .....backwards! Sometimes, I find it hard enough walking forwards where I can see where I'm going but backwards - what Chris meant was that we would be walking the route in the opposite direction to last year's walk. He promised that there would be seats for all at the designated coffee and lunch stops. Chris asked for someone to write up reflections on the walk so that Mike would have something to do on Christmas Day ... so here it is on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017!



### ***Chris' Christmas 'Hokey Cokey' "You put your left foot in" .... met with mixed success!***

The 14-strong group set off but I stopped to talk to the two speed check people and got the low down on the speed to keep under - they report speedsters to the police who do issue letters and on the third time expect the heavy hand of the law to be knocking ..... anyway it was time to run and catch-up before I lost the group. Just as I left, a lady driver came down the hill sedately only to accelerate passed the checkers and then slam on the brakes for the corner round The Dog and Donkey!

Crossing the B3178, we went through the woods to follow roads, paths and the South West Coast Path towards West Down Beacon, skirting the expanding mobile home complex, the Commandoes' training camp at Straight Point to the Geoneedle at Orcombe Point for a coffee break. There were sufficient wet seats for everyone. In addition to three lots of mince pies on offer,

Ian provided mulled wine. En route we saw buzzards and a kestrel. There were many landslumps – Chris challenged me to jump up and down near the edge: having done a quick risk assessment and HSE analysis, signed off in triplicate by the Walk Leader, I jumped up and down ... I would love to say that I had the ride of my life down the landslide similar to Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner in "Romancing The Stone" but nothing happened much to Penny's relief!



***Chris asking for a volunteer to jump up and down near the edge to create another one of these .....***

Orcombe Point is at the western end of the Jurassic Coast. The layers of red mudstone and sandstone that make up the cliffs here were laid down in a desert some 250 million years ago, at the start of the Triassic Period. They formed not long after the most devastating mass extinction event known, when 95% of all species were wiped out. The rocks at Orcombe Point contain no fossils, echoing how the environment of the Early Triassic was reduced almost to a blank canvas. The Geoneedle at Orcombe Point is an impressive landmark constructed of the various rock types found along the World Heritage coastline. It was commissioned from public artist, sculptor and designer Michael Fairfax to commemorate the opening of the World Heritage Site and was unveiled by HRH the Prince of Wales in 2002. Michael also conceived and designed the "Exeter Riddle" in Exeter.

We walked a new path from the Geoneedle to a footpath near Douglas Avenue on the outskirts of Exmouth, which eventually led to Littlemead Church for lunch at 13.00. The original parish church dates back to the 13th century and is dedicated to St Margaret and St Andrew. The churchyard is famous for being the final resting place of Lord Nelson's estranged wife, Frances Nisbet, and her son. As there were only enough benches for nine to sit comfortably, others had to improvise around the church entrance. Unlike last year, when the ladies were cleaning the church, the toilets were not open .... Argh!

From Littleham, it was along the track of the old Budleigh Salterton Branch railway line and eventually back to Knowle. Five of us 'retired' to The Dog and Donkey for tea/beer and reflections on the walk and what Christmas would hold for each of us.



***They forgot to put the roof on the aviary .....***

Does the direction of a walk make a difference? Yes ..... low winter sun, prevailing wind, different views and perspectives ....

And finally ..... the fear of Friday the 13th is called friggatriskaidekaphobia or paraskevidekatriaphobia. Friggatriskaidekaphobia comes from *Frigg*, the Norse goddess of wisdom after whom Friday is named, and the Greek words *triskaideka*, meaning 13, and *phobia*, meaning fear. Paraskevidekatriaphobia is also derived from Greek: *paraskeví* translates as Friday, and *dekatria* is another way of saying 13.

The master of suspense, Alfred Hitchcock, was born on August 13, 1899 - so Friday, August 13, 1999 would have been his 100th birthday. He made his directorial debut in 1922 with a movie called Number 13. Unfortunately, the film was doomed from the start and never got off the ground due to financial troubles.

My last day of work was Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2015 - unlucky for my employer but the start of a fantastic life down in East Devon with the OVA!

***Paul Kurowski***  
***13 January 2017***