

Wednesday 15th February 2017, Templer Way, Stage 1 with Mike Paddison

"The Promise - Downhill all the Way"

Four conscientious walkers walked to the park and ride bus stop to join all the other people patiently waiting in the queue for the 09:30 bus pass start time so that we could all board quickly and the bus could get away on time. Then at precisely 09:30 with a wonderful demonstration of customer service, the driver slammed the door in the face of the queue, which at the front included two elderly ladies one of whom was using a walking frame, and drove off at some speed. One wonders about Stagecoach recruiting strategy! and management guidance. The driver of the next bus was such a contrast, it partially restored one's faith in mankind.

Later that morning six committed walkers piled out of the people carrier taxi at the Information Centre at the foot of Haytor. The journey from Exeter had seemed to pass quickly, but that was probably down to the preparations which involved 'posh' coffee for some and fully loaded¹ hot chocolate for others.

The walking group set out on a fixed compass bearing that the walk leader had worked out the night. As a result we did not do the usual wander around Haytor looking for the path to the Templer Way. We arrived at the start point in record time and posed for the group photograph



¹ fully loaded implies added marshmallows and a generous dollop of whipped cream

The walking conditions were a great contrast to that in previous years. The sky was high and bright and the ground was relatively firm underfoot. The walk leader gave a brief description of the walk and then the group set off at a pace. Since the path is clearly delineated by the granite track way stones, the walk leader soon found himself in his normal position at the back of the group.

The walk progressed around Haytor Down and into Yarner Wood for a quick coffee break. At this point, in response to a question, the walk leader confirmed that the walk was indeed downhill all the way. The walk continued down hill along the beech lined track, some parts of which had been recently cleared of over growing brambles and gorse etc, until in the middle of Lower Down, at the start of a permissive path through ancient orchards, a gateway and notice blocked our path.

This was a shame because the orchards, which were planted in the 1950's and contain local Devon apple varieties that were 'undergoing a careful restorative pruning to enhance their productivity' and we were keen to see signs of progress! However it was not to be and we had to take an alternative route - and you have guessed correctly, this path was totally uphill followed by a further half a kilometer downhill walk on a busy road. The only upside was that we didn't have to walk through the eastern edge of the orchard which on other occasions had been very wet.

Near the Edgemoor Hotel we picked up the Temper Way again to walk through Brimely Wood, and then across the bridge over the Pottery Leat. This leat feeds water to Pottery Pond which in times past powered the machinery in the Bovey Tracy Potteries.





We stopped at the Pond for lunch in the sunshine and were entertained by the antics of the amorous mallards giving hope to the notion that spring was just around the corner.

After lunch, a brisk walk in the sunshine along minor roads brought us to the Great Plantation that was once part of the Templers' Stover Estate but is now owned by the Forestry Commission.

By a stream, which is fed from the many ponds nearby, we stopped for the final group photograph.



And finally, a short walk from the bridge brought us to the Drum Bridge Roundabout and the bus back to Exeter. A very pleasant walk in near ideal weather conditions.

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