

Saturday 6th July, “National Meadows Day Walk” with Vivien Insull

17 of us met in front of the beach café at Charmouth, mingling as we did so with the runners who were about to start the Charmouth Challenge, an 8 mile fell race (a quick Google shows it includes the coast path between Charmouth and Golden Cap – rather than me!).

We started on our own challenge – tackling the neglected footpaths of west Dorset.

After a stroll through Charmouth, we entered the unspoilt countryside around Wooton Fitzpaine. This was clearly an area seldom walked – there were fences to climb where there should be stiles, overgrown paths, nettles and brambles to negotiate and a “trespass” through a farmyard.



However the views were magnificent. We were so near to East Devon, but the landscape has a different character, still hilly, but more open. Butterflies and other insects flew about us, including a beautiful golden ringed dragonfly (thanks, Chris, for the identification).

After lunch, we walked through flowery meadows with more butterflies, then a long, steep but thankfully shady hill, ending at the A35. Thus ended part 1 of our day.

Part 2 was a visit to Hogchester Farm, as part of National Meadows' Day, arranged by Heather. A false start took us to The Tunnel, which turned out to include a rifle range, archery, and a rope trail through the trees. A happy meeting with a dad and his son pointed us in the right direction and we found the wildflower meadows of Hogchester and, in the distance, a red umbrella and the promise of free ice-cream.



After admiring the meadows, butterflies and the view to Charmouth and the sea, we hurried to the umbrella which shaded Rob (the farmer) and his ice cream cart. He happily dispensed cones of delicious ice-cream and then launched his drone to take a group photo – what a good idea. He then explained how he'd bought the 75 acre farm and was now learning about making meadows, and re-wilding, creating what was, in effect, a nature reserve.



Then down to the ponds Rob had dug, we saw dragonflies including a black tailed skimmer (thanks again Chris), and on to Charmouth for a welcome cuppa and cake for some of us.

Thanks to Vivien for the walk and Heather for the Hogchester visit. A super day.
An Intrepid Explorer