

Wednesday, 21st July “The Path Less Travelled” with Brian Turnbull

It was quite a challenge to lead a walk on the hottest day of the year - especially as it was the first time there had been a Met Office Amber Warning of Extreme Heat - but Brian was ahead of the game. He'd decided to reverse his original route so that most of the uphill part came first, leaving the shady paths for later in the morning.

Eleven walkers, kitted out with sun hats and plenty of water, set out on the East Devon Way, passing through the apple orchards into Southerton. From there the path slowly ascended through dappled woodland to a sun-drenched Harpford Common where the heather was in full bloom. Past Benchams, a quick head count revealed four missing, but the walkers who'd stopped to take photographs of a Silver Studded Blue butterfly were quickly rounded up and our walk continued to Venn Ottery Hill where we skirted the quarry on a shady path, emerging on to a lane with wonderful views in all directions. Then a sunken green lane brought us into Venn Ottery, where we had a short stop to admire St. Gregory's church with its Saxon tower and round doorway, the only part of the church which survived a fire in the 18th century which also destroyed most of the village.



The final part of the walk was an intriguing network of little-used and rather overgrown paths, passing a “badger city” and through shoulder-high bracken and wildflowers. We saw several other butterfly species along the way – speckled wood, peacock, silver washed fritillary and meadow brown.



This was a very enjoyable, intriguing and varied walk – the perfect length for such a sizzling day. It was good to walk with friends again and to enjoy a relaxing morning together after such a chaotic period in all our lives. Our thanks to Brian Turnbull for planning and leading this lovely walk.

Rosemary Hatch (with photos by Stella French)