

Wednesday, 13th July “Around Sidbury Castle” with Graham Knapton

Eleven of us met in Harcombe Lane, Sidford, and Graham was pleased to state that the temperature forecast was cooler than the previous days. As promised, we started the steady and steep climb up Buckton Hill. Having passed Buckton Farm, we paused for the first of many wonderful views, and just before entering the woods, we stopped to look at a bird of prey in a nearby tree ... was it a young kestrel or a falcon? As the others started the climb up the stony path in the woods, I waited with David White-like patience and was eventually rewarded with a half-decent glimpse.



The others had waited for me at the top of the hill ... only to start the steep descent on the stony and slippery steep path out of the woods: we were on the East Devon Way. Having receded the walk a month or two earlier, Graham offered an alternative less steep detour which four decided to take .. only to report that the brambles and nettles had grown up since then! Having crossed a stile out of the woods, we were reunited with a view to our next destination - Sidbury.



We crossed the River Sid (at 6.5 miles, the shortest complete river in England), we walked along Bridge Street admiring the flowers and the thatched cottages and stopped at St Giles Church. Some of us took the chance to explore its interesting history and interior and all of us enjoyed a brief coffee break and the chance to sit down.

Leaving Sidbury on the East Devon Way, we passed Black Pits Plantation and Sidbury Castle (an Iron Age hill fort) without realising it - probably talking too much! We passed Goosemoor Farm on the ascent to White Cross where we were rewarded with the official coffee stop and another wonderful view.



From there it was more or less downhill through White Cross Plantation, more stony lanes, then into the outskirts of Sidford, passing St Peter's Church and back to Harcombe Lane and the hot cars. Two walkers decided that a trip to The Blue Ball pub for lunch was needed.

The company was great with many, varied and interesting topics of conversation and, in my case, no politics! There was an interesting debate at one farm advertising "free range eggs": there was no hyphen between "free" and "range" ... this meant that the "range eggs" were "free"!

Thanks to Graham for leading us on new paths and some familiar paths with wonderful views.

Paul Kurowski