

Thursday, 26th January “Colmer’s Hill and Thorncombe Beacon” with Jon Roseway

This was a walk of hills and stiles in West Dorset, near Bridport. It made us realise how lucky we are in East Devon where so many stiles have been replaced by gates. Stiles cause problems to the less able, can lead to injury, slipping in the mud that inevitably pools around them, and delay the progress of groups of walkers.

The hills were challenging too, but the reward on this clear day was always glorious views.

We parked at Symondsburry Estate, and 10 of us set off up our first hill – Colmer’s Hill. This iconic cone-shaped hill, topped with trees, is a familiar sight to travellers on the A35, just west of Bridport. A biting wind troubled us all the way up, but the trees provided shelter as we admired the 360-degree panorama from the top. We also noticed the LED light panels in the trees – apparently it looks spectacular when lit and seen from the road on a dark night.



Plenty of mud accompanied us as we made our way towards Chideock. We stopped at the cross commemorating the Chideock ‘martyrs’, seven men who were executed in various grisly ways during 1587 to 1649 for being or aiding Catholics. The cross stands on the site of Chideock Castle – this had been destroyed by the Roundheads, and only the traces of earthworks remain.



Then it was down to the sea and a coffee-break at Seatown. From there we tackled the coast path eastwards, culminating in the heights of Thorncombe Beacon. From here we could see the cliff falls around West Bay – a reminder that, as at Budleigh and Sidmouth, nature always wins!



Then it was back across farmland and a dare-devil crossing of the A35 to arrive at the Symondsburry “Kitchen” Café for a well-earned and delicious lunch. Some of us stayed afterwards to explore the excellent art gallery and various shops on the site – and to say hello to the Oxford Sandy and Black breed piglets in a nearby field. A place well worth a visit, even if you don’t fancy such a long walk!

Thanks to Jon for leading us – and picking the best day of the week for it.

Penny Kurowski