

CRC Sidmouth Weekend 2023

Thursday 4 May

After the success of last year's Isle of Wight holiday, expectations were high as 50 of us set off for Sidmouth. The outward coach quiz tested Coronation knowledge (proving to be a bit lacking!), as well as a few other local facts and places to work out. The winners were Chris and Sue, but only after coming slightly ahead on a tie-break question against Margaret and Mairi.

The weather was a little windy and cool while some of us braved a picnic lunch on the esplanade before setting off on two walks.

A Walk – Salcombe Hill (3.5 miles)

22 of us headed up Salcombe Hill to get some good views of Sidmouth and also saw plenty of bluebells in the woods on the way up. Luckily it stayed dry until we reached the point where we turned off the coast path and headed into woods. We got slightly damp on our descent into Sidmouth, but still enjoyed the stretch along the Byes (a park along the River Sid) back to the hotel. (Leader Carol)



B Walk – Easy Sidmouth Loop (2.5 Miles)

Following our lunchtime arrival in Sidmouth, eating a packed lunch on a very blustery promenade, we set off on a tour of the attractive town. We arrived at Connaught Gardens just as the heavens opened, so were very glad to seek shelter and sustenance in the Clocktower Cafe. This is a former C16th Lime Kiln now serving excellent cakes! We returned via Jacob's Ladder and the Promenade. (Leaders Jenny and Gordon)

Friday 5 May

A Walk – Otterton to Sidmouth (8 miles)

Five members enjoyed a pleasant stroll from Otterton to Sidmouth through the Otter Estuary Nature Reserve to the south west coast path back to Sidmouth. Beavers have recently been introduced to the Otter Estuary with its saltmarsh vegetation and mud flats. Lots of birds were spotted (E.g. Canada geese, mallard, shelduck, a mute swan on its nest, robin, stonechat).

We met the C party near a aircraft lookout station which has been converted into accommodation. There were cafes next to the River Otter in Otterton, at the caravan site in Ladram Bay and at the Connaught gardens in Sidmouth where we met with some of the B party. (Leaders Robert and Janet)



B Walk – Budleigh Salterton to Sidmouth (7 miles)

The B party of 12 walkers were dropped off at the end of the beach at Budleigh Salterton for a 7.5 mile walk back to the hotel at Sidmouth. Initially we walked inland through the lower Otter Nature Reserve, with new wildlife viewing platforms, to cross the River Otter via a bridge and then back to the coast. From here the walk is fairly flat until we reached the spectacular Ladram Bay for lunch. From Ladram Bay it is a steep climb to High Peak and Peak Hill, which give good views. From here we start our descent into Sidmouth via Jacobs Ladder or Connaught gardens back to the hotel. (Leaders Rob and Glynis)





C Walk – Otterton to Budleigh Salterton (5 miles)

After half an hour browsing around the stalls, craft shop and art gallery at Otterton Mill 16 Club members headed out through the village, eventually reaching the coastal path as the sun came out (after an earlier shower!) and we were rewarded with stunning views of the coast. A leisurely stroll across the fairly level grassy coastal path led us to Brandy Head look out post for us to have our picnic lunch; where there were just about enough seats! The B party looked rather hungry as they passed us in the opposite direction on their way to Ladram Bay for their own lunch break!



Finally the last stretch led us to the picturesque Otter Valley Nature Reserve and the regeneration project which is still in progress.

We were glad to reach the beach café at Budleigh Salterton for some refreshments as we waited for the coach. (Leaders Jane and Andrew)

D Walk – Bicton Park Botanical Gardens to Budleigh Salterton (3 miles)

The walk exchanged the spectacular delights of Bicton Garden for the quieter, less manicured pleasures of walking down the Otter Valley and associated wetlands, which were occupied by numerous egrets and other wildfowl. At Budleigh Salterton the path became part of a construction site since a £16m project is underway to re-engineer the river and wetlands as a climate change protection and wildlife enhancement measure. (Leader David J)



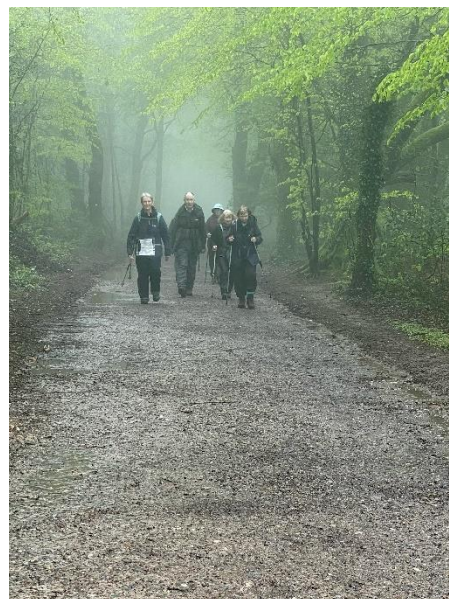
Saturday 6 May (Coronation Day)

A Walk – North of Sidbury to Sidmouth (8 miles)

The A walk on Saturday was led by Guy with a little band of 4 other patient walkers. Guy had looked at the start of the walk last year but either the mist or his memory caused him to have problems with the initial start. Once we were on the well signposted, East Devon Way, there was no problem, but later we took a wrong turn in thick woodland. A passing motorist assisted with the route finding, and The Blue Ball Inn at Sidford was still open and welcoming in the early afternoon. The interestingly named, 'The Byes', footpath then took us easily back to our sea side base. Distance worked out at around 8 miles. (Leader Guy)

B Walk – Sidbury to Sidmouth (7 miles)

The rain had at least stopped by the time seven of us started this walk, but unfortunately the mist persisted. We were walking the western half of the Sid Valley Ring, with two of the highlights being the views from White Cross and Beacon Hill, which were left to our imagination. At least it gave the six Scottish Country Dancers on the walk time to discuss their dance plans! However, we did enjoy the bluebells in the woods on Harpford Common, and then a road of enormous detached houses with impressive gardens on Bickwell Valley as we headed into Sidmouth. (Leader Carol)





C Walk – Sidbury to Sidmouth (5 miles)



We delayed our start of the eastern half of the Sid Valley Ring to the afternoon in the hope of better weather (which we got) and a chance for some to watch the Coronation. Starting in the pretty village of Sidbury a rather steep ascent followed by a steep descent took us to the Snod Brook and then via the Byes back to Sidmouth somewhat shattered! (Leaders Jenny and Gordon)

D Walk – Donkey Sanctuary to Sidmouth (4.5 miles)

The donkey sanctuary was shrouded in mist, but we managed to see quite a few in the barn and paddock before starting the walk. The early part of the route was blocked by thick undergrowth, and we had to make an unexpected uphill detour. We reconnected with the path and had a very pleasant walk through Sidford, with the sun breaking through as we walked along the lovely Byes Path into Sidmouth. Special thanks to Chris W and his Ordnance Survey app, which helped us locate the path again, and to John P for his help. (Leaders Lynne and Chris W)



Saturday Dinner



As it was Coronation Day, we enjoyed a special Coronation Dinner at the hotel, with Pimms, Union Jacks and hooters!

Sunday 7 May

A Walk – Beer to Sidmouth Coastal Walk (10 miles)

On the best weather day of the weekend, the cliffs progressed with the walk, changing from white chalk initially to terracotta mudstone later. Treats along the way were coffee at Bramscombe Mouth and an inland detour that fortuitously took us to the donkey sanctuary just as the donkeys were corralled and a talk on their welfare was about to begin. (Leader David J)



B Walk – Beer to Branscombe (6.5 miles)

Another very steep walk, but we did it! A welcome coffee stop was had in picturesque Branscombe, some favouring the Mason's Arms, others making use of the conveniently placed benches overlooking said hostelry. (Leaders Jenny and Gordon)



C Walk – Colyton to Beer (6 miles) with optional Seaton Tramway ride

Mary and Dave led the 'C' group which started from Seaton. Some members travelled on the narrow gauge electric tramway to Colyton, 3 miles through two nature reserves with abundant wading bird life. The rest of the group went by coach to Colyton and were made very welcome in the lovely old village church, where the Coronation service had just finished and drinks were being served! The whole group then met up and walked 6 miles, partly alongside the River Coly, and through the Holyford Woods nature reserve. The walk finished in the picturesque seaside village of Beer, a memorable ending as the village was colourfully decorated and a huge Coronation tea party for over 100 children was in progress. (Leaders Mary and Dave)



Evening Entertainment

Before dinner on Sunday evening we enjoyed seeing a display of Scottish Country Dancing.



Monday 8 May

Wells

On the way home we stopped in Wells for 2½ hours. Various coffee shops and cafes were sampled, and many of us toured around the cathedral.

A football teams quiz kept travellers quiet for much of the rest of the journey! This time Norman and Lynne were the winners.



As on previous holidays we were driven by Mike from Bevans, who was cheerful and helpful as always.

We are now looking forward to Harrogate next year!