

## Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> February “Templer Way Stage 1” with Mike Paddison

When the leaders planned this walk months ago I suspect they imagined it might be cold or even snowing on Dartmoor in February. But it was the hottest February on record for the UK and a wonderful sunny, bright day for walking.

After alighting from taxis at Haytor Visitor Centre, we took a track in a north easterly direction to join the Granite Tramway.



The tramway is impressive and was visible for most of our route. Constructed in 1820 to transport stone from Haytor to the Stover Canal (and thence to the coast at Teignmouth), it is shaped to guide the wheels of horse-drawn wagons and the “point tongues” were clearly visible. Although there was high demand for Dartmoor granite for public buildings and bridges at that time, the tramway had to close in 1858 when they could no longer compete with the price of cheaper stone from Cornwall.

For your information, I found this description of the opening of the tramway, such a change from contemporary ones – *“On Saturday Mr. Templer, of Stover House, gave a grand fete champetre on Haytor Down, on the completion of the granite rail road. The company assembled at its foot on Bovey Heathfield, and in procession passed over it to the rock. A long string of carriages, filled with elegant and beautiful females, multitudes of horsemen, workmen on foot, the wagons covered with laurels and waving streamers, formed in their windings through the valley, an attractive scene to spectators on the adjacent hill. Old Haytor seemed alive: its sides were lined with groups of persons, and on its top a proud flag fluttered in the wind.”*



As we left Haytor behind the sky was clear blue and the only sound came from the song of the skylarks. A haze of smoke on the horizon turned out to be a controlled burning of gorse (swayling) but luckily the wind was in the opposite direction. Taking grassy footpaths and skirting Yarner Wood we saw several butterflies including yellow Brimstones.



We descended towards Bovey Tracey, still following the tramway towards some ponds, where we stopped for a quick lunch. We were joined by two curious swans who obviously wanted to share our sandwiches!



Our leaders had timed the walk perfectly to catch the bus back to Exeter and we emerged from the path at Heathfield with 15 minutes to spare.

This walk had been meticulously planned and recce'd and was tremendously enjoyable and interesting. Thank you Mike and Paula.

Rosemary Hatch