

Friday, 8th December "Sid Valley Ring (eastern half)" with Penny and Paul Kurowski

Paul and Penny had led an OVA group round the western half of the 'Sid Valley Ring' a month previously and now seven walkers joined them for the other half on the eastern side. It was a bright and dry day compared to the very mucky weather of the day before, so there were no complaints.

We started at Sidbury parish church and walked southwards out of the village along a quiet street lined with pretty cottages of the picture-postcard variety. Then we traversed around Buckton Hill on lanes and tracks to the hamlet of Harcombe - a good spot for a group photo.



Here we left the hard surfaces with a warning of deep mud near the footbridge over the Snod Brook that fortunately turned out to be a false alarm. A short ascent brought us to Knowle Park and we passed through the collection of converted farm buildings set in the attractive grounds of Knowle House. This is a Grade II listed building dating from the 17th century with window designs that speak of extensive renovations during the Victorian era. More climbing on footpaths took us to the busy main coast road which we crossed safely and stopped at a small, isolated brick-and-flint building. It was restored by the Sid Vale Association as it houses the water pump installed in 1884 by the sons of the local vicar as a memorial to him. The pump delivered piped water to the hamlet of Trow for the very first time and saved the inhabitants having to carry water in buckets from a spring half a mile away.



We now crossed some rather boggy fields belonging to the Donkey Sanctuary, which has become one of the major outdoor attractions in the area since its inception in 1969 and has an excellent café. However, Paul saved us from the temptation of sugary cakes by choosing for our coffee stop some benches in one of the avenues of memorial trees! Resuming our walk, we passed through

Dunscombe caravan park and joined the coast path. Three buzzards greeted us with a stunning display of their aerobatic prowess, wheeling and soaring just above our heads on the updraughts created by the breeze hitting the cliffs - a wonderful sight. We squelched our way along the coast path enjoying the seascapes as we skirted Lincombe and then turned inland towards Salcombe Regis.



In accordance with the revised route of the Ring, we didn't go past the church, but Paul told us that the churchyard is the resting place of two illustrious scientists who lived locally - Sir Norman Lockyer (d.1920), the discoverer of helium; and Sir Ambrose Fleming (d.1945), a pioneering designer of radio transmitters. Buoyed up by this information we rapidly re-joined the coast path at the Frog Stone (a warning, it only looks like a frog from one specific angle). We enjoyed splendid views westwards along the coast while descending Salcombe Hill and in no time found ourselves at the end of the walk on Sidmouth Esplanade after about 7.5 miles.

There was time to thank Paul and Penny for their efforts and grab a late lunch before catching the bus back to Sidbury to pick up my car..... except the bus didn't turn up, but that's another story!

Jon Roseway

NB: You can find some of Paul's interesting facts and others on the Sid Valley Ring leaflet (<https://www.sidvaleassociation.org.uk/?id=221>)