

Zenecans Walking Group at Porlock: Sept 9th - 13th 2018



We gathered at Porlock, first 5 'early trekkers' and then the main group 2 days later. Ray Tucker and Kevin Price were our organisers. Their preparation had been meticulous and the whole event was to run smoothly; perhaps something to do with all those years of ICI/Zeneca/Syngenta training. Our hotel, perhaps fittingly, was The Lorna Doone. Located in the centre of Porlock with a pub next door it proved very comfortable with good food and helpful staff.

The 'early trekkers' met on the Sunday for an afternoon's local constitutional of about 5 miles in preparation for the next day: 15+ miles from the Valley of the Rocks, a well-known landmark just west of Lynton, back along the coastal path to Porlock. There were lots of ups and downs and we reckon the ascent (and descent) was well over 3000 ft. The weather was fine, the views superb and, as long as we kept the sea on the left, were unlikely to get lost. No real danger of that happening because Ian Stott was with us. His mobile phone not only had an excellent OS mapping app so that we always knew exactly where we were, but also enabled keeping up with that exciting 5th test at the Oval against India when Cook and Root got hundreds. A pint at the end, a quick wash, then back into the pub for dinner and to watch the cricket highlights on the big screen. Knackered, with only one blister, we adjourned in preparation for 'the moor' around Simonsbath the following morning. Inland, hills, rain and mist: a total contrast.

Lunchtime Tuesday saw the arrival of the others, including Simon Laidler who joined us for the first time. A leisurely lunch followed by a stroll to Hurlestone Point and then back to the hotel for an insight into Exmoor from a member of the The Exmoor Society. We were all ready the next day to tackle Dunkery Beacon, the highest point on Exmoor and a fine *Marilyn* if ever there was one. A drop of at least 492 ft (150 m) on all sides (the definition of a *Marilyn*), and with fine weather we were able to take in its 360° panorama. Some had chosen the 'longer' route from Porlock which took them through Horner Woods, a particularly attractive ancient pollarded oak pasture. Back to Porlock in the afternoon and the AGM in the beer garden of The Ship Inn. It didn't take long!

Thursday also turned out fine and dry, ideal for a two-hour stroll along the beach to Minehead to wind down. It seems that no Zenecans trip now would be complete without a trip on a train pulled by a steam locomotive. Minehead station is the end of the line for the West Somerset Railway, so we jumped aboard alongside the crowds of 'other' tourists for the journey back to the start, and a pub lunch before going our separate ways.....until next year, when Ian Stott and Chris Ursell will guide us around the Yorkshire Wolds.

It's always good to see old colleagues. The craic, the banter, lots of nostalgia, the humour and laughter, even the BAA exam on the move without books, all testimony to the camaraderie and lasting friendships.

Thanks Ray and Kevin.

From Left to right: John Coutts, Peter Froggatt, John Gray, Peter Thomas, Chris Ursell, Kevin Price, Mike South, Tony Moran, Ray Tucker, Gary Stoddart, Alastair Aitken, Peter Rankin, Chris Gooderham, Simon Laidler, Ian Stott, & Bob Noon. Absent were: Pater Northwood, Neil Niblock, Martin Frost and Kevin Eddison.

John Coutts October 2018.