

Midsummer Madness

Nine members participated in both walks, choosing to stay in Cornwall and six more joined us on the second day. The weather was hot and, as I discovered, the walking was spectacular but very difficult in parts – more so than I remembered.

I have already apologised to the participants for taking them out of their comfort zone but fortunately not too ‘way out’. No one cracked, everyone survived and ended up with a warm afterglow that was 10% sunburn and 90% achievement.

I used the OS guide which is extremely informative but makes only occasional comments on the degree of difficulty. So racked with remorse for my negligence I consulted the SW Coast Path Association Hand Book - the bare facts are as follows:

Day 1	Distance	8.8 miles	Ascent	2392 ft	Grade - Strenuous
Day 2	Distance	10.2 miles	Ascent	2664 ft	Grade - Strenuous

For comparison, if you were holidaying in the Lake District and you climbed Scafell Pike (3207 ft - the highest mountain in England) from Great Langdale (a popular starting point) you would ascend about 2600 ft!!!

In future, I promise to be more careful but, looking back, I am delighted that everyone got so much out of a testing two days. ‘Midsummer Madness’ was a phrase used as a joke but in the event it was an appropriate description. Fortunately everyone appreciated the joke – at least in retrospect. I am very grateful for the contributions below and the photo selection from many taken by Cathy, Keith and Ruth, all of which give a flavour of the enjoyable event.

Trevor

The Midsummer Madness event took place on June 25 & 26. It lived up to all expectations! Thanks to excellent instructions, we all arrived at the correct car park in Polzeath. Most of us had time for coffee before setting off for the bus to Port Isaac. The coast path was strenuous but we had plenty of stops to rest & admire the wonderful views. The setting of our evening meal on the prom at Polzeath & the company were just great.

Jarka & I took a softer option, 7 miles on the Friday, starting at Bude, as Trevor predicted that all the way to Crackington Haven after lunch would be even steeper & longer than the day before! We walked back to Bude after lunch, partly with Ruth, first paddling along the wide stretch of beach, partaking of an ice-cream and continuing back to the town. Beautiful seascapes all the way! We had a cream tea on the quay to finish this glorious day. We set off for Exeter around 6.30pm

Our many thanks to Ruth & Trevor for all the organisation. We are looking forward to more adventures next year.

Jarka & Christine

I think ‘breathtaking’ sums up the Midsummer Madness experience in every way! The views were certainly awe inspiring especially when we came upon yet another valley and faced the almost vertical climb out of it. There was certainly some heavy breathing (and wobbly knees) by the end, but a feeling of euphoria as we travelled back on the bus having made it with minutes to spare. Thank you Ruth for the wonderfully welcome cup of tea at the end, and thank you both for the splendid planning and endless encouragement. Remind us to get to bed early and not imbibe late into the night next time – if there is a next time! Cathy

Trish and I decided to book 3 nights accommodation in Cornwall and found a B&B in Boscastle mid way between the two walks. Fortunately they were offering 3 nights for the price of 2!! The place turned out to be in the higher part of the village and so, on the Wednesday evening, we walked down a very steep hill to the river to find a number of good eating establishments. A meal of scallops, prawns and halibut sitting outside on a terrace on a beautiful sunny evening seemed a good way to prepare ourselves for what was to come. The walk back up the hill certainly turned out to be.

The next day started with an excellent cooked breakfast. We know from experience that this helps keep the energy levels higher later in the day. We certainly needed it. Setting off for New Polzeath in plenty of time we came upon a Road Closed sign. Without any diversion signs we drifted through Cornish lanes before rejoining the road further along, only to find another Road Closed sign!! Eventually we reached our destination to find the ever helpful Trevor redirecting us from the carpark to some free roadside parking.

Nine of us gathered to take the bus to Port Isaac. At least two had forgotten their bus passes! Before setting off on the walk, the considerate and thoughtful Trevor advised us to drink plenty of water and to rest whenever we needed. Little did we know then how sensible this advice would be. We soon came across our first climb of the day. A line of steps confronted us: all 179 of them. There were many more to come and I did not bother to continue the count! Out on the cliff tops the views were spectacular but the day was becoming very warm and a little humid. Every now and then we would catch a most welcome breeze.

Descending in to Port Quin, Trish and I realised that our water supply was running low. We came upon a window cleaner who surely had water. He however directed us to a public tap of drinking water. Everyone drank and filled up their bottles with this delightfully cool liquid.

We continued up and down valleys and over stunning cliff tops. Late in the afternoon when New Polzeath was at last visible across the fields, we stopped to discuss a possible shortcut. Nick and Kathy claimed to be meeting some friends and so took this option! Since Trevor said that walking out to the nearby headland would not take long, the rest of us decided not to wimp out. A short while later I noticed from Trevor's map that we were going along three sides of a square! However it proved to be well worthwhile. Pentire Point is stunning with impressive views into the Camel Estuary. Back in the Doom Bar some cold beer ended a brilliant day.

That evening, after freshening up, Trish and I decided that we had had enough steep hills for the day and so chose to eat at the next door pub. As we got there, a band of Morris Dancers were just starting to perform in the courtyard. That and a lobster salad was a perfect way to end the day.

The following day, fortified by another cooked breakfast, we gathered in Bude for what destined to be an even more strenuous day. A few day-trippers joined us. Our aim was to get to Crackington Haven to catch the 4.00 pm bus back. If we missed it we could enjoy a cream tea and wait for the 6.00 pm one. As it turned out we very nearly missed the later one!! The first part of the walk was gentle, across grassy hillsides towards Widemouth Bay where we stopped to lunch. We had been warned that there were some very steep climbs later on. We had not expected to clamber down a nearly vertical hillside into a deep, deep valley; and then up again on the other side. Plenty of water was being drunk. A little earlier we had stopped by a stream where everyone had filled a spare bottle with cool, cool water, used to pour over one's head. Many followed Trevor's advice of filling our hats with water and then wearing them. A very effective cooling device.

After a few more valleys, albeit not as steep as the first, we staggered into Crackington Haven to down yet more cold beer.

The next door pub was once more the place to eat!

Although the walks were more demanding than we had anticipated, we thoroughly enjoyed them. The memories of the pain soon disappear but those of the wonderful scenery do not. A very big thank you to Trevor for arranging a correctly named 'Midsummer Madness'.

Trish and Keith

Day 1: Port Isaac to Port Quin



Lunch between Port Isaac and Port Quin



Lundy Bay



No one counted these steps!



The Rumps (or as our children called it: Stegosaurus Rock)



Polzeath from Pentire Point

Day 2: Bude to Crackington Haven



Leaving Bude



and an easy walk to Widemouth Bay



Lunch – fuelling up



The sensible ones strolled back to Bude



Cool, cool water



Is this the last valley? NO!