

HINGSTON DOWN and DANESCOMBE VALLEY

Maggie has taken this walk I first recced a couple of years ago and turned it on its head, thus creating a completely new route as described in the latest programme. So today everyone parked at Calstock Quay and caught a bus up to the A390 where we alighted to begin the walk; two more people joined us here bringing our total today to 23.

With ground still wet from yesterday's downpour, gravity was carrying running water downwards along the uneven terrain of Crow Lane as we walked. Further on and beyond a metal five-bar gate on our right, there are fine views to be had of Dartmoor over to the east. Here in the Tamar Valley we have a saying that goes ***"You are more likely to see five bars on a gate than on a mobile phone"***



As the track zig-zagged upwards, the hedge on our right was topped with tall, pink Rose-bay Willowherbs and near the corner was this trig point, a relic from the days when Britain was first mapped by using triangles. This triangulation point along with all the rest lies obsolete now we use satellite navigation, but you can be forgiven for not noticing it today as it doesn't look like this now. I took this photo five years ago before Mother Nature decided to make it look like a tree stump by covering it with ivy!



At the next bend a gate led into Crow Lane Allotments and as Ray has Man-flu, it was down to me to show a few of the walkers around our plot, while everyone else waited patiently for us to return. I was able to report later that they were all suitably impressed!



When everyone re-assembled, we continued upwards passing first Roundbarrow Cottage and at the next corner, Roundbarrow Farm where the track went left. We followed this as it got gradually narrower towards the end; a few steps led us up onto an overgrown

path and out onto Hingston Down. The sloping ground in front of us contained masses of Brambles just covered in green Blackberries; some of us made a mental note to come foraging here in a month or two.



Nearing the old mine we paused to take in the stunning views south from here following the River Tamar all the way to Plymouth Sound and the sea beyond. Small heathland plants were dotted about amongst the grass which was closely cropped by rabbits judging by their droppings littering the ground. I spotted yellow Bird's-foot Trefoil and



Tormentils, purple Self-heals and dainty little white Eye Brights. With the sun high in the sky, it was pointed out to me that hundreds of raindrops were twinkling like diamonds on the longer blades of grass at the edge of the track.



This shell of an engine house on Hingston Down was where William Murton was mine captain in the 19th century, travelling here every day by pony and trap from Calstock Road in Gunnislake. The mine was just one of many in the Tamar Valley and it employed 225 people which was broken down as 167 men, 33 females and 25 boys. Back then this deserted engine house would have looked a lot like this one at Pool in West Cornwall which was preserved in later years. Amongst the usual minerals mined hereabouts, a new one named Arthurite is said to have been discovered here at Hingston Down Mine by Sir



Arthur Russell, a British mineralogist in 1954 long after the mine had actually closed, but it was not named until ten years later, in 1964.

After a short visit to the ruined building with its flight of steps inviting us inside it was time to begin our descent down this track, known locally as Old Mine Lane, there was purple heather and Gorse growing to either side of us but I expect most people were looking ahead at the view; by this time the weather had turned quite humid and we soon began to peel off any outer clothing we were still wearing.

Crossing the main road at the bottom, it wasn't long before we joined a narrow footpath beside the Rifle Volunteer pub, here everyone followed Maggie towards a football ground and a children's playground then out on to a narrow lane. A left turn and then a right turn led down to the hamlet of Todsworthy where we entered a field through a gate.

We have all been this way before so I won't go into great detail in this article but we knew we would find a stile in the corner with some pretty dodgy steps behind and a damp rocky path leading to Danescombe lying beyond that. After a brief pause beside Danescombe farmhouse, everyone returned to Calstock via the shady footpath down through the valley where we knew Lower Kelly at the bottom would carry us back to the village; it was now almost three hours since we first left to catch that bus. Thanks Maggie, another great walk!



