DORSET MVR HOLIDAY REPORT

During the first week in April fifteen of us (plus Rowan) had a walking holiday in West Dorset, based at a Dorset Wildlife Trust Field Studies Centre called Kingcombe, to the north west of Dorchester. We had a self-catering cottage, along with bedrooms in the Centre, and one campervan; we shared our evenings together in the cottage. This made for a highly economical, and enjoyable holiday; nothing like cooking together to bond a group.



Beech Cottage, Kingcombe

We (Andy, Jacqui and I) planned a series of walks, several directly from the Centre, and others incorporating sections of the wonderful Dorset coastline. There were many more walks that could have been done, and we offered a choice of walk lengths one day. The itinerary:

Sat	Powerstock Common, Powerstock, Spyway, Eggardon Hill	9 mi
Sun	Portland circumference, clockwise	11
Mon	Guided walk around Nature Reserve	2
Mon	Kingcombe, Hooke, Mapperton, North Poorton	10
Tue	Cerne Abbas, Minterne Parva, Up Cerne, Ridgeway south, Nether Cerne	9
Wed	Hardy's Cottage, Stinsford, Lower Bockhampton, Puddletown Forest	5.5
Wed	Eype, Symondsbury, Venn Farm, Morcombelake, Golden Cap, Seatown	12
Thurs	Rain stopped walking, Dorchester sights	2
Fri	Compton Abbas, Fontmell Down, in rain	2

We had a guided walk of the Kingcombe meadows one day with an ecologist, and learnt a lot about how DWT were encouraging farming practices to best promote biodiversity.



Newt survey on Powerstock Common

We were also fortunate to meet naturalists involved in a newt survey at one of the many ponds on the reserve.

The countryside we walked through was stunning, with the added bonus of primrose banks, thick hedgerows of blackthorn blossom, and amazing coastal views.





On the west side of Portland



Sculpture Park, Portland



Sheltering from wind at Portland Bill

We found grand houses, with cafes to pause at...



Mapperton House

and a few obstacles, such as paths that turned into ever thicker scrub, electric fences live across stiles, gates that wouldn't open, and milking time to contend with.



But we were not to be thwarted. On the plus side there were plenty of pubs to sample within a short drive of the Centre, and glorious views in every direction.



Braving the farmyard, Cerne valley



Happy walkers in the sunshine on the Wessex Ridgeway

For most of the week we had bright sunshine (and cold nights). We had planned to save our toughest walk for the last day, but, guided by the weather forecast, we brought it forward, and managed most of it before the black clouds turned to hail downpours. Here are some more photos from that walk.



View from Hardown Hill, Morcombelake



Near the summit of Golden Cap



National Trust memorial stone at Golden Cap



What a hairdo!



Rowan



Heading east down from Golden Cap

On our last day we resorted to indoor activities, sampling the delights of Dorchester's museums and cafes, and visiting Hardy's Cottage.



Hardy's Cottage, Higher Bockhampton

On our departure day two brave (mad?) souls walked near Shaftesbury through torrential rain and visited Compton Abbas airfield and its cafe, which they recommend.

All in all it was a very successful holiday, with great company, lots of walking, ideal accommodation, plenty of laughter and delicious shared meals. All the planning proved worthwhile. It was so rewarding to see the pleasure everyone had, including my faithful companion Rowan (you can come too Kes when you are a bit bigger). Thanks to everyone who participated, to Jan for photos, and to the Kingcombe Centre for looking after us so well, (and sorting out the odd puncture or two!).

Fiona S
April 2019