

THE FINAL LEG OF PAM AND STAN'S TREK

DAY 14

Packed up in the rain for a 6am start. Two stiff climbs ahead and 220 steps up to St Albans Head, where there is a small chapel thought to have been built about 1200.

Very difficult walking. Grey, oily, sticky mud which built up on our boots. The nodding donkey, a miniature version of the Cornish mining pumps, produced 400 barrels of oil daily from the Kimmeridge clays.

We had to make a long diversion inland at one point, because a very strong off shore wind made the coastal path dangerous. Saw a haversack right on the edge of the cliff. Stan "fished" it nearer with a piece of wire. Inside were sandwiches and clothing. Near the Head there was a coastguard practice cliff rescue in operation complete with helicopter, gale force winds and rain. We reported finding the haversack.

We camped near Swanage overlooking the Bay in sight of the Needles and the Isle of Wight.

FINAL DAY

Very pleasant walk into Swanage passing Durlston Castle, which had a huge stone globe in the grounds. Picking up the path to Studland at Old Harry Rocks, which are chalk pillars, we walked along the beach, as the tide was out, to catch the ferry to Sandbanks. Studland Heath behind the beach is a 400 acre Nature Reserve with a great variety of flora and fauna including human nudists. In Poole, Stan of course, had to visit the RNLI Headquarters, and we had to buy an item of Poole Pottery as a prize for forecasting our E.T.A. This week was won by Naomi Warne. We telephoned Suzanne Race at Ringmore P.O. every other day to report our progress. This was shown on a map displayed in the P.O. The nearest campsite was 2½ miles inland so caught the bus to a very up market site. We entered their large carpeted reception room and decided to stay on the doormat. (I had grown a beard; we were wet and still dripping.) The receptionist, quite rightly, didn't think we were respectable enough for their restaurant and suggested that we bought fish and chips. They gave us a map with a cross on it. This spot turned out to be on the extremity of the site next to a railway line, in long grass. (In the morning much to Pam's horror, the outer tent was covered with slugs.) This was the end of the walk. We caught a bus back home.

We have enjoyed reliving memories of this section of the South West Way. Over the next 2 years we completed the walk from Minehead to Ringmore. This was an unforgettable experience. We continued long distance walking including Suffolk, Norfolk and Pembrokeshire coast paths and The Peddars Way, a Roman Road from Thetford to the Wash.

(I was fascinated by the logistics. Every day was different terrain, weather; - there are different types of rain! - and challenges. I would like to thank Emily and Angie for deciphering my hieroglyphics.)



VISIT TO SUE MULLER IN FRANCE 8th to 16th May 2010

Many Ringmoriens sent their best wishes to Sue when they learnt that Ann and I were the first couple from the village to visit her this year. For them and others who are interested Sue was very happy to see us and appears to be coping very well with Max, her dog, for company. She does though find the winters rather long and the house much too big for her present circumstances. It is on the market but it is early days and she says that French Estate Agents are much worse than their English counterparts so is not expecting an early sale. She has not firmly decided where she will live next but it is most likely that she will return to the South Hams with Totnes being the most likely district, close to her daughter Joe and family.

Unfortunately the weather was not very kind to us for our visit, some sunshine but predominantly grey and misty, hiding the beautiful mountain scenery for much of the time. We did though have several easy walks around lakes and some slightly more energetic ones on hills and even one on a ski slope at 1700 metres, when it snowed! Mandy, Sue's other daughter, lives in Chamonix, and visited us with her family at Sue's house on the Sunday and we drove up to see her the following day but Mont Blanc was obscured with cloud, even though we had lunch in the sunshine; it poured with rain the rest of the afternoon! Sue has made many friends of various nationalities whilst in France and although her French is good for every day purposes it falls a little short for deeper conversations. If she returns to England there will be many opportunities to meet them again on return visits to family in Chamonix. She sends her best wishes to all her friends in Ringmore

John and Ann Bracey