

COLUMNISTS

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NORTH DEVON 17

Full steam ahead for walk around Parracombe and Killington

Linda Fewings

enjoys the countryside and the railway with North Devon Ramblers



ON a gloriously sunny but chilly morning, 18 walkers and one dog gathered at Woody Bay Station Parracombe for a North Devon Ramblers 5.5-mile walk around the village of Parracombe and the surrounding countryside.

First, however, was a one-mile ride to Killington Lane and the start of the walk, on the only steam railway in the UK where passengers travel in Victorian railway carriages designed in the 1890s.

The passing scenery was beautiful. The views stretched across fields to the coast at Heddons Mouth and the Greater and Lesser Hangman above Combe Martin.

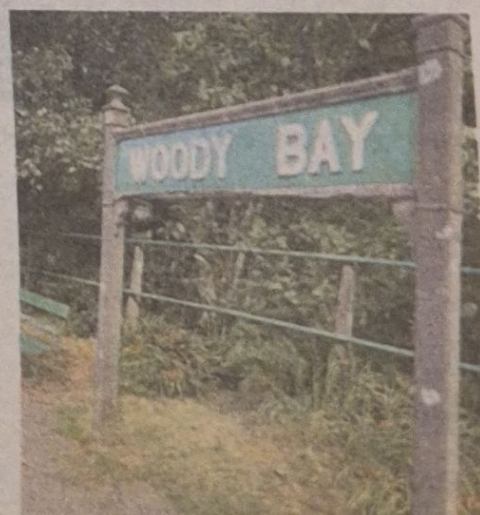
Leaving the train at Killington, we started the first loop of the figure of eight walk. Returning to Killington

halfway round meant anyone who would like to, could catch the train back to Woody Bay rather than walking back.

The first part of the walk involved a half-mile bridle path, walking downhill before branching off across fields with lovely views of Parracombe below. Another downhill path bought us to Bodley, just above the village before dropping down via a narrow path between cottages.

Nestling in the Heddon Valley, Parracombe and the surrounding parish is home to around 300 people. There is a pub, shop, village school, two churches and an ancient castle.

Climbing up out of the village we passed railway buildings still there beside the road. We crossed a small bridge and looked down on what would have been the railway line as it entered Parracombe station. Next stop was nearby St Petrock Church, looked after by the Churches Conservation Trust, and open daily. Set up on the hilltop it is a medieval building with a light Georgian interior with painted texts and furnish-



Walkers gathered at Woody Bay station, Parracombe for a 5.5-mile walk around Parracombe and the surrounding countryside, taking the steam train back

ings that have hardly changed in 200 years.

We then walked on to the village stores, built in recent years and run by the community for the community. It is stocked with West Country produce and everyday groceries. There is also a cafe, picnic tables and a recreation ground ideal for our lunch stop in the sun.

Next came a series of stiles to give access across fields before walking the short distance back to Killington station. Stiles are barriers to many while out walking and there is a gradual replacement of them to gates on many paths, always bearing in mind the safety of livestock.

Back at Killington we said goodbye

to those returning by train and followed a long bridle path beside the railway before dropping down and over a stream. We climbed up to the Woody Bay road, again with beautiful views of the surrounding countryside and the railway line far below.

Turning right, we followed the road back to the station, and the end of our walk.

With grateful thanks to Exmoor National Park for clearing footpath 12 to enable us to walk it and the Moorview Hotel and Lynton and Barnstaple Railway for all their help.

<http://www.northdevonramblers.org.uk>