

2023 LYDFORD BEATING THE BOUNDS – Saturday May 20th

Well....!!! The day dawned bright, sunny and clear. First tick in the box.

Everyone turned up (second tick), all 86 at the start, and after being checked in by the start team of Pip, Judy and Sue, the Rev Adrian's kind blessing sent us off on our way. We trooped out of the sports field down an empty lane (courtesy of excellent road marshalling by Howard and Roger) to turn left at Bolt House heading up the mucky track to reach the first boundary stone out on the road to Hedge Cross. Many children sat on, hugged or beat the stone before we walked down the road (expert marshalling by the dynamic duo once again) to turn into Lydford Forest and follow its perimeter tracks down to the river to eventually cross over the Lyd on the suspension bridge below White lady Falls. She was in full flow and a sight to behold, especially from the bridge viewpoint. The long and slow path up out of the gorge followed where we had our coffee stop with the refreshments all provided courtesy of the National Trust. 9 of our party left at the end of this stage, 4 miles completed. A couple more joined us as we headed onto the road over the weak bridge with cars being controlled by... yes, you guessed it, the terrific twosome!

Up through the gate after the railway bridges to Black Down where we headed down to the next boundary stone outside Hall Farm. More picture taking and stone admiring and beating took place before we back tracked up the path to walk around Henscott Plantation to rejoin the boundary just before the A386 crossing. This time Rob the Ranger broadsided his truck across the road and a couple of our gallant walk leaders provided a similar obstruction to halt the vehicles as we crossed over, past the 3rd stone, and through the Willsworthy car park. Stones 4,5,6 and 7 were rapidly arrived at all alongside the small stream that runs down to join the Lyd through Watervale and so the first soggy shoes of the day were experienced. The weather was still glorious so soggy bits did not dampen our spirits! We arrived at Willsworthy Camp for lunch and the completion of Stage 2, 7 miles gone. The MoD had given us permission to use their side gated entrance and the building where the lunch team, ably led by Jodie, Ian and Hazel, had been joined by Lt. Col. Crispin D'Apice to provide an excellent spread of pasties, cheese baps, crisps, soft drinks and water (courtesy of the Beating the Bounds funds and The Dartmoor Inn). Around half of our party had agreed to finish here and were duly presented with their Certificates by Nick on behalf of the Parish Council. The 9 children were awarded their £2 coin.

Suitably refreshed, the Stage 2 completers headed back to Lydford via the Lich Way led by Katie. Some additional walkers now made the group up to 44 and we continued our quest around the full boundary moving through the main gate past stones 8,9 and 10 then taking the paths up to the boundary along the side of White Hill before meeting the Wallabrook gulley. The next stone was reached at the Wallabrook Head where a well-earned breather and water stop was needed. There then followed the slog of the day all the way up to the cairn and stone 12 between Sharp and Hare Tor which we hit spot on. Here, Paul R. left us with the weak excuse that he was leading a walks group to Fur tor, 12 miles, the following day! It was great to have him along with his expert knowledge of all things Dartmoor. The next stone at Deadlake Head is always a devil to find from this direction but Steve H (who had taken over the leading from Paul over the moorland stretch) set his sights on Great Kneeset, headed over the brow and arrived spot on with no deviation (repetition or hesitation for our older readers!!). The upright and recumbent stones were tagged by old and young (we had 6 under 16's with us for this last stage) and it was downhill past the Pits to number 14 at

Deadlake Foot. A longer stop for hydrating as it was now quite warm with not much of the breeze that was on the top of the moor. Inevitably, the long stretch along the Rattlebrook stretched us all out and it was a be-straggled line that met back up at the stone (our 15th) although some of the tailenders had decided to miss out this really soggy bit and head for Higher Dunnagoat instead. Another slog up through the grass and clumps to reach the said tor and boundary stone with the wonderful site of extra water, crisps and choccy bars brought up by Tracey greeted us where we spread out amongst the rocks. It was now approaching 5pm and some were looking at their watches needing to be at other places in the evening. 2 ladies had already sprinted on ahead (with permission!) to get back asap (they duly did by 6pm apparently) and a few more would peel off in due course leaving out the last few stones.

Along to Lower Dunnagoat and a weak path across to the main track leading down to Dick's Well and stone 17. Then downhill (yeaahhh!) to Arms Tor where a bit of confusion for the tail enders saw them deviate across the top rather than to the side of the tor before reaching the millennium stone at the foot of the tor. Steve L managed to get back on track (having valiantly been the back-marker all the way round) and they eventually joined us a Nodden Gate (after stones 19,20 and 21) to enjoy the beer, cider, soft drinks and more crisps that had been provided by the pop-up bar run by the Fox and Hounds. The quote of the day was made here, by Mick, who on arriving looked down at Max, Dave's black Labrador laying flat out on the grass; "That's just how I feel".

For some reason, this injection of refreshment (!) seemed to put a spring in our step and off we then sped across the fields following the boundary to Vale Down where the last of the stones (our 22nd) was passed although strictly speaking it is probably more of a relocated mileage stone. A new pair of road marshals greeted us for the A386 crossing (thanks David and Ross) where we walked up the side of the road to then cut down through the front garden of Burley View to exit into the fields alongside following the boundary line running along the north of the garden here. Cutting across the Granite Way to Fernworthy Down (the boundary deviates back across several gardens and then along the tributaries into the Lew preventing accurate following) we crossed the clapper bridge before heading UP the last hill of the day to reach Bolt House, and the lane back to the Sports Field.

All 44 finished the stage including the 6 youngsters (hope you don't mind being called one of these, Ryan?!) We were then treated to a hot stroganoff and rice from The Castle Inn plus more cheesy baps and pasties from Lydford Farm Shop. The Dartmoor Ice Cream Company had provided loads of their stunning ice cream and barrels of excellent beer were on tap from The Dartmoor Inn and the aforementioned Castle. Others from the earlier stages joined us to sit in the sunshine or under the marquee or in the pavilion enjoying the food, drink and recounting our tales. Certificates were presented and double coins for the fantastic kids who competed the whole darn trek.

We have to thank our local hostellers and suppliers who responded wonderfully well with food and drink at all our stops, including the National Trust at our coffee stop, Dartmoor Inn at lunch and finish, the Fox and Hounds for the pop-up stop, the Farm Shop, The Castle Inn and Dartmoor Ice Cream Company at the finish. Thanks to all the land owners for permission granted, Lydford Parish Council and The Commoners for the funds, and a REALLY BIG thank you to the wonderful Beating the Bounds Working Group and volunteers who organised and helped make the running of the event go so well.

We will be back in 2030 --- watch this space!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!