

BARRY DYSON - COCKERHAM CIRCULAR 11/8/21

On an overcast day myself, Owen, Carole, Janet and Howard set off on a 5 mile walk that was entertaining and troublesome but not without interest.

Some of the 8 stiles, 4 footbridges and 2 gates provided us with some pause for thought. A machete would have been welcome to reach one of the stiles, many of which were in a poor state of repair. Wonky, and missing step-overs, resulted in some unusual climb over manoeuvres, but it was all good fun wasn't it?

Soon after passing St Michael's parish church we entered a field full of perforated dock leaves, the culprit being the Green dock beetle.



The next field which ran alongside the River Cocker held a wide variety of arable weeds including Scarlet pimpernel, Scentless mayweed, Knotgrass, Common field-speedwell, Groundsel, Pineapple weed, Shepherd's purse, Spear thistle, Perennial sow-thistle, and not forgetting the various grasses which Owen drew to our attention. Before reaching Little Crimbles Carole alerted us to a Kingfisher that sped downstream giving us no time to admire its beauty. I had seen one here in previous years when out walking with Mike Sutcliffe. Then it had had a fish in its gape and no doubt was returning to feed its young further upstream.

On crossing the footbridge that led over to Little Crimbles farm (1790) Owen just had to take our picture which is why you will never see a picture of him. He always does this. Our timing was a little unfortunate as two beekeepers were finishing their business from a particularly active hive.



Sure enough myself and Carole both sustained bee attacks leaving Janet to administer some lotion that alleviated our suffering oooh, aaah.

Moving swiftly on we made our way past weasel wood and on to Crimbles lane, such a lovely name, rhyming very nicely with Dimples lane in Garstang, don't you think, but I digress. The lane had some fine beech trees almost completely covered with a variety of pale lichens a good indicator of pollution free air. This was further proven by their leaning appearance caused by the prevailing westerly winds across the flat fylde landscape.

Crossing over the A588 we finally stopped for lunch by Cockerham marsh although amazingly no one had complained about feeling hungry. Well done you lot. A first.

Lunch saw a Greenshank calling teu teu teu as it landed out of sight. Also here was a small flock of Linnets currently on the RSPB red-list of birds of conservation concern. A large flock of gulls and an even larger flock of corvids erupted into the sky, no doubt caused by a hunting peregrine. A lone Kestrel hovered over the marsh.



The marsh was full of Parsley water-dropwort and saltmarsh rush while the embankment held Ladies bedstraw, Bird's foot-trefoil and other stuff which I've forgotten. Butterflies were thin on the ground but included Green-veined White, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Small Tortoiseshell and Large White.



Five Rheas in a farm field seemed a little bizarre but a hoped for Little Owl at Hillam farm didn't show. Two Egyptian geese at Cockerham quarry would have been better seen through a telescope while a herd of Alpacas a little further on completed our list of exotics. Water pepper and Yellowcress had been nice to come across.



By now the weather was taking a turn for the worse but we got back to Cockerham village hall car park just in time before the predicted rain arrived. A good time was had by all - I think.

Barry