

'A Photographic Journey Around the South West Coast Footpath' by Gary Holpin

10th February 2022 <https://www.garyholpin.co.uk/>

Gary started his presentation by asking members if they had walked part of the South West Coast path and the vast majority of our members raised their hands. When asked if they had walked the entire way no hands were raised which isn't surprising for the longest of England's national trails at 1,014 km or 630 miles. However it was obvious from the excellent questions at the end that some of our members had walked some of the more difficult stretches and were keen to walk more of the South West Coast path. We were grateful to Gary for allowing us to 'live stream' his presentation and indeed one of the questions came from one of the 42 members who had logged on from home.

Having moved to Devon for work Gary was determined to find out more about the South West area he had moved to and what better way to experience the landscapes, seascapes, towns and villages by exploring the walks of the South West Coast path starting in Minehead, Somerset and ending in Poole, Dorset visiting much of Devon and Cornwall as he trekked up many steep paths. Indeed as Gary explained the total height climbed at just over 35,000 metres is almost four times the height of Mount Everest.

A first walk along the entire trail is a real achievement but being bitterly disappointed with his photographs Gary set out to walk the trail again, this time in a clockwise direction with the aim of completing all sections and improving his



photography along the way. The record for running the entire length is just over 10 days but most people complete the trail by walking different sections over a number of years as Gary did.

As well as wonderful photographs we were shown a photo of plasters, very necessary as Gary soon found out when he developed blisters. However this didn't deter Gary as he continued with his walks.

We were treated to some stunning well composed photos and it was clear that Gary was determined to secure those definitive shots whatever the weather or the time of day or night including standing on Paignton beach in a blizzard, facing the Beast from the East in Sidmouth and then an inspirational shot of the Milky Way over Sidmouth at 03:00!

We were privileged to see some of Gary's favourite places as he developed his passion for photography such as Vendor Falls near Ashburton, Kennick Reservoir for the reflections and Emsworthy for the bluebells all in the Dartmoor National Park.



By the end we knew that long coastal walks had helped Gary ‘really see’ the beauty and drama of the fabulous area covered by the South West Coast path, a favourite being a view overlooking Salcombe visited 30 times by Gary since his walk there in 2009. Finally, Gary recommended the South West Coast Path Association to us <https://www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk/> Their website is informative and interesting with details of the walks and plenty of help in planning an itinerary.

Thank you Gary.

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Review and photo of Gary Holpin by Christine Chittock, Chair and Speakers’ Coordinator