

River Brock Walk

A lone Diesel engine rattles Northwards on the West Coast Main Line under the metal pedestrian footbridge and past the site of the old Brock station, now a Pocket Nature reserve. 7 miles to go and the secret 7 are heading East under a sky of 50 shades of grey, the only blue to be found in the odd bluebell, making an earlier than usual appearance on the riverbank. Under the Motorway and soon the whooshing sound of rubber on asphalt has been replaced by full nature. A metal bridge at an odd angle and we are on the south bank, houses in this idyllic location, one thought to be owned by a comedian, it's no joke.

Steps quicken as we approach a sign warning of snakes, the smell of wild garlic, bridges, old but resilient, a weir demands a photo, stiles of various designs, muddy streams to cross, a trap for the unwary, then Rain, long overdue but expected none the less. A totem pole, once a tree stands guard and points the way, more Rain, heavier now. One man and his 4 dogs, coats dripping, looking how we feel. Riverside paths of slippery stones and muddy puddles, the rain easing off, stopping. Uphill now, tree roots strategically placed to assist in the



Photo by Graham

short but steep ascent. At the top, tall trees swaying in the wind, birds' nests perched high up on a permanent roller-coaster ride.

Lost in a field, a hidden way marker found saves our blushes. A little used road and back at the totem, wetter but undeterred. The breeze picks up and we are being blow dried, blue sky still in short supply, an action photo is choreographed, it has to be done. A man casting a fly from the centre of the river, Paul Whitehouse 'Gone Fishing' maybe? No sign of Bob! 82 steps over the railway, a car showroom there to tempt us, then the secret 7 become the famous 5 and as the café beckons, we try not to lose ourselves in the Barton Grange Garden Centre. Lunch, a well-earned sit down and a nice cup of tea, the river Brock seems to have speeded up as it flows past our window.

Mike Ripley