

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2015, Dorset Ridgeway, Coney's Castle and Lambert's Castle with Vivien Insull**

***"A Very High View"***

As 'webmeister' for the OVA Walk Section, it pains me to see a gap in our table of walk reports for what was a very enjoyable walk. Therefore in true walker spirit I pulled out my trusty pen to draft a walk report. However the walk was about seven weeks ago and so at best this is a personal recollection rather than a contemporaneous walk report.

We gathered in the beach car park at Charmouth. Nearly every one arrived early, some even managing tea and buns before we set out. The weather was fine and everyone was in good spirits. Promptly at 10:00am we set out to walk North back to the town/village of Charmouth. En route, one member unadvisedly mentioned that today was his birthday. With one uniform voice the group responded with a view that cakes and pastries should be bought for the walkers; that there was a very good bakery in Charmouth and that our route would take us past its front door. One sage commented that this was the way that precedents get set. We crossed the main road in Charmouth, and found the bakery in what appeared to be a converted garage behind the shops in the main parade. The requisite numbers of buns were purchased leaving the 'baker' with the difficult task of explaining the lack of choice to any future customers.

The walk continued north, with the birthday person struggling under the weight of all the extra food and mumbling how far was it to the first coffee stop. We passed under a very noisy A35 and continued along Monarchs Way - we looked for butterflies in vain until one of the more erudite walkers pointed out we were on the wrong continent! After navigating our way around Wooton Fitzpaine, we continued to northwards on the Liberty Trail, which suddenly, out of nowhere, became the Wessex Ridgeway. At this point, coffee time was called and, much to the relief of the birthday person, Danish, rock cakes and other buns were distributed all around. Much to his relief nobody thought to sing 'Happy Birthday.

We continued along the Ridgeway to Long Lane and hence Coney's castle where we have since discovered that *"Coney's Castle hillfort is a roughly kite/shield shaped univalate Iron Age enclosure of around 5 acres (a little over 2 hectares), probably built in two phases. The main ramparts have an annex of around 1.5 acres (0.6 hectares) tacked onto the Southern end. The defences for all ramparts are strongest on the North, East and Southern sides. 'Coney' is a Medieval word for rabbit - many hillforts acted as warrens in the post-Norman period.*

We took time to admire the view back to the coast before again heading North for 1.5km, this time to Lambert's Castle where we found a convenient place for lunch.

*"Lamberts Castle was built around 2,500 years ago; a prominent ditch and bank still survive near the western entrance. Like Pilsdon Pen, this early Iron Age hillfort with a single ditch and bank (rampart) also has a rich and varied past. Between 1709 and 1947 an annual fair was held here on the Wednesday before the feast of St John the Baptist on June 24. You can still see the imprint of the fair house and the low banks marking the livestock pens or market stalls. During the 18th century there was also a horse-racing track built as part of the fair. This is still visible today to the southwest of the hillfort straddling the Wessex Ridgeway".*



After a convivial picnic in fair weather, we set out initially in a Northerly direction to exit downhill from the fort. This was followed by a post-lunch walk up Hawkesmore Hill, where after gathering our breath, we commenced our return leg of the walk.

Whilst the outward leg was mostly in a straight line going northwards, the return leg was anything but straight. It was varied in terrain, gradient, direction, conditions underfoot and visibility and we were thankful to our leader who had recon'd the route some weeks before and displayed a confidence that not all of us felt. But we soon joined up with our outward path and made good time back to Charmouth and finally the beach where one enterprising couple announced that they had brought home made cakes. So, for the second time, we sat down to another feast of tea and cakes that nicely rounded off what was universally agreed as "a fine Dorset walk". Many thanks to Viv for an enjoyable walk in new territory.

***Backmarker***  
***5 December 2015.***