

Friday 22nd June 2018 – “An Ancient Dorset Beauty” with Vivien Insull

I had been looking forward to our walk in Powerstock in Dorset as I was the only one who turned up for the walk in the autumn. On that occasion it was such a wet miserable day that Vivien and I decided to abandon it and reschedule the walk.

Powerstock Common Nature Reserve includes parts of the ancient Common of Poorwood which became Poorstock Royal Forest after King John purchased the Manor and nearby Deer Park at Nettlecombe in 1208. In the mid 1800s, the locals' grazing rights were removed and the loss of the grazing animals led to tree regeneration across the old common. Large trees were felled during the First World War and dense blocks of conifer plantation have been cleared by Dorset Wildlife Trust staff and volunteers over several decades. This has helped form a mixture of natural habitats which meant we were treated to an amazing display of Common Spotted orchids and even a rare Bee orchid.



Many butterflies were seen including the green veined white, common blue, large skipper, speckled wood, small heath, the brimstone and the six spotted burnet day moth.

We all climbed up Eggardon Hill to the Iron Age hill fort where we were treated to far reaching views over Marshwood Vale to the coast at Burton Bradstock and West Bexington. It was a lovely spot for eating our packed lunch.



Eggardon Hill is an Iron Age fort where there are two Bronze Age burial mounds dating back over 3,000 years. The hill fort was built about 2,500 years ago and consisted of three massive ramparts, two ditches and two entrances. Inside were round houses and storage pits. In Saxon times, about 1,500 hundred years ago, Eggardon Hill was where the 'hundred moat' gathered, an open area council or court which met twice a year.

The speed counter was turned up as we headed for the Marquis of Lorne 16th Century pub in Nettlecombe for liquid refreshment. The village of Nettlecombe looked very attractive as we passed by.

On our return to the start point, we passed the ruins of the railway gangers hut which is at least 150 years old and used by labourers on the disused railway line during World War 2 to transport oak timbers from the Common. Recently, it has provided shelter for endangered lesser horseshoe bats but was recently destroyed by arson. A Crowd funder pledge is currently in place to replace the hut.

What a great day out, thank you Vivien for researching this lovely area for a summer's walk and ensuring the weather behaved this time.

Heather Fereday