

Saturday 19th October, “Castles, Hills and Autumnal colour along the River Teign” with Stella French

This is the third year that Stella has led this walk and it's still popular. The clear blue sky may have helped people decide. We started at Castle Drogo and made a long gradual descent to Fingle Bridge, where the strong flow and deep brown water in the river could be studied up close. Inevitably, the next stage was a long and fairly steep ascent. About halfway up we got the classic view west down the valley with Dartmoor as a backdrop.



There was something odd about the castle though, and then I realised - the cocoon of white plastic I've got used to seeing for the last I don't know how many years has gone. To be truthful, I preferred it wrapped in plastic because naked, it doesn't look nearly as impressive, but I'm sure the NT would disagree.



For our group photo at the top we stood inside another castle - Cranbrook Castle, an Iron Age hilltop fort.

There was a chilly breeze blowing as we sat on the earth wall of the castle and ate our lunch, but well wrapped up it was worth it to enjoy the commanding views of the Teign Valley



Descending from the castle to Fingle Bridge, conversation covered such critical issues as the shenanigans that had gone on in Strictly Come Dancing the previous evening and the likelihood of England winning the rugby World Cup. I saw a waymarker labelled 'The Dartmoor Way', which was new to me, but others thought they had heard of it. A bit of research back at home told me that it's a 100 mile-long path that hugs the perimeter of Dartmoor NP. It was first defined in the year 2000, but curiously, not waymarked until this year and therefore not shown on OS maps. Not yet walked by the OVA (as far as I know), I vote that it goes to the top of the list for our annual long-distance path projects.

We strolled along the riverbank and noticed the trees starting to show their lovely Autumn colours, then it was the long haul back up to Castle Drogo for a cup of tea and cream scones for the greedy ones. Well done to Stella, who was doing the walk for the second consecutive day as her recce had been delayed to the last minute - what devotion to duty!

Jon Roseway