

Wednesday 13th November “There’s nobody in!” with Penny and Paul Kurowski

Not only was somebody in at The Nobody Inn at Doddiscombsleigh, they let us use the car park and toilets before setting off on our walk.

Ignoring the enticing aromas emanating from the kitchens, nine of us set off up the hill beside the pub. As we approached the hamlet of Higher Ashton we passed Place Barton, an old manor farm with a wonderful “Great Barn”; at 23m long and 7m wide it lives up to its name. The farm buildings have been tastefully restored and are now hired out as a wedding venue.



Our route then crossed France Brook (does anyone know why it has this name?) and took us up steep roads to Haldon Forest. The forest was looking lovely, with the golden larches amongst the drabber evergreens. Up and up we climbed, and views towards Dartmoor unfolded. We passed under the “Go Ape” cables, and gratefully reached the visitor centre area with welcome benches and toilets. Thanks to Derek and Elizabeth for bringing their delicious Sunset apples to add to our coffee break.

From there it was an easy stroll along the “Discovery Trail” through the woods with, at times, good views towards Exeter, before heading steeply up to Haldon Belvedere. This landmark, also known as Lawrence Castle, has stunning views – it was just clear enough to see Exmoor, Dartmoor, the Exe Estuary and the sea and, of course, down to Doddiscombsleigh.

Paul gave us a quick geology lesson: Doddiscombsleigh is placed on the outer perimeter of what is known as the “metamorphic aureole” surrounding Dartmoor, ie, the rocks were altered by the heat generated by the magma which eventually formed Dartmoor. This has resulted in minerals being deposited in fissures in the rocks, and the area was historically known for its mining activities – in Doddiscombsleigh there were manganese workings and jasper could be found.



The only way now was down – all the way to The Nobody Inn! We stopped in Tick Lane to admire some friendly alpacas.



It just began to rain as we reached the cars, so it was a quick boot change, bag a few more apples

from Derek and Elizabeth, then into the pub for a well earned lunch.

I have promised Paul a return visit to the area very soon, to explore the Grade II* listed church at Higher Ashton, which apparently has the finest collection of medieval glass outside Exeter cathedral, as well as painted plaster and a decorated rood screen. The Grade I listed church at Doddiscombsleigh is also on the list, again with medieval stained glass. Perhaps we will go on a summer Sunday afternoon when the Belvedere itself should be open for visits (see <https://www.haldonbelvedere.co.uk/visit/opening-times/>)

Penny Kurowski