

Tuesday, 30th November “Castle Neroche Iron-Age Hillfort” with Iain Ure & Dee Woods

We'd never heard of Castle Neroche, even though we pass within a couple of miles of this impressive iron-age hill fort every time we travel along the A303!

The walk started in a car park at the top of the hill, and we passed through the edge of the hillfort and steeply down through glorious woods which just hung onto the last of their Autumn colour.

Our walk continued past isolated farms and cottages to our coffee break in a little hamlet. Onwards to Staple Fitzpaine, a tiny village of 189 inhabitants (thank you Wikipedia). Here at the cross-roads there were some sandstone boulders which according to legend had been thrown there from Castle Neroche! We visited the Grade 1 listed church of St Peter - well worth a visit, the crenelated tower is quite unusual, and there are several other notable features.



From here it was a gradual undulating climb through woods, muddy fields and Mount Fancy Farm nature reserve. The nature reserve is managed for butterflies, and would be glorious in summer! All we saw were lots of anthills, and two lovely Exmoor ponies who decided to follow our party for a while.



Eventually, after a final steep climb, during which we encountered dragons (someone had got creative with their carving of a fallen tree) we were back at the hillfort, which commands some amazing distant views.



It is also the site of a Norman Motte and Bailey castle. There would have been scope to explore more, but the weather was deteriorating, so after the final treat of seeing a couple of passing deer, we returned to our cars. A super November walk, thank you Dee and Iain.

Penny and Paul Kurowski