

Monday 30th November “Exeter Green Circle – Part One” with Penny and Paul Kurowski.

David and Rosie, who had missed last year’s walk, were waiting at the No. 58 bus stop in Budleigh Salterton. Sitting upstairs on the No.58 and then No. 57 bus, we had clear views cross the full Exe estuary – we waved at friends/relations in Cockwood! Five more people joined us at the East Devon Crematorium bus stop. On time, we set off on our ‘miles of surprises’.

Details of the walk are in last year’s report so these “reflections” are the things that I remember seven hours later:

- Just after starting, Ruth pointed out a Dipper in the Northbrook - disappointingly not dipping.
- Rosemary explained that Woodwater Lane, which we criss-crossed on our route, went from Exeter to Topsham port. On one of the OVA walks in the summer, we walked along the path from Newcourt Station that was once part of it and it is believed to be an ancient track. On this track was a small church where travellers could stop to pray. Whilst we could not see it, suburbia has been built up around the ruins of it – see Historical Note below.
- The whole walk had been planned around St. Katherine’s Priory café being open and we were not disappointed. Having bought coffees, hot chocolates and cakes, we admired the internals of this wonderful old building. I summarised some of the features using Historic England’s details from Penny’s phone: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1017595>. We marvelled at the outside of the building (see photo below) before moving into Mincinglake Valley Park for a walk alongside the stream where the nuns had had their lakes with fishes – presumably for Friday’s dinner.



- Haylor identified a fungus with his useful App – we concluded that it was a Giant Funnel (*Leucopaxillus giganteus*).



- A steep ascent that had been a muddy trudge last year was much better as it had been gravelled. At the top, we had far-reaching views over equestrian fields and a derelict farmhouse.
- Lunch in Duryard Valley Park provided spectacular views over Belvidere Meadows and large houses opposite made even more special by a complete rainbow framing the view.
- David highlighted a White Egret in one of Exeter University's muddy lakes prompting a discussion about egrets having increased in numbers whilst the numbers of herons had declined.
- We spent time reading the interpretive board in Bury Meadow Park as there is so much history associated in this part of Exeter: John and Charles Ware built the paired villas of Velwell Road overlooking the park; and Richard Veitch and Son was established a nursery round here.
- We arrived at the Iron Bridge to end the walk at 14.15 with enough time to do some Christmas shopping before catching the bus back to Budleigh Salterton.

Historical Note:

The ruined chapel in Burnthouse Lane was dedicated to St. Loyes, a 7th century French goldsmith who is the patron saint of metalworkers.

Archaeologists examining the site of a demolished pub, The Gardners Arms, opposite the Wonford Lidl found a large moated enclosure believed to have been the "palace" of Queen Edith, the wife of Edward the Confessor. There were also remains suggesting it was a large house in medieval times too. Edith was the Lord of the Manor of Wonford before 1066 and Wonford was a royal estate and a "Hundred". Heavitree church is believed to have been the site of the minister of the Hundred.

Interesting historical places, great weather, great company, great conversation ... a great walk. The second half of the Exeter Green Circle is on 30 January 2019.

Paul Kurowski