

UERSA WALKING GROUP

April - June 2011

Dates: Mon, April 4 (short) Tues, April 12 Thurs, April 28
Tues, May 3 Tues, June 7 (short) Tues/Wed, June 14 / 15 Tues, June 28 (short)



Come and join us!

The new programme includes a tour of Okehampton Castle and the annual away-walks in midsummer for those who fancy a mini-break in Dorset. In addition there are five other walks at the usual variety of locations. Hope you will each find something to your liking. The reports contain many photographs mainly thanks to David Oates who is actively snapping on most walks.

Trevor March 2011
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FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

- 10.30 am Monday, 4th April Okehampton Castle Guided Tour**

This is a guided tour led by Bob Higham , an archeologist who has done much work on the site.

Meet in the Castle car park (GR 585944): turn left at the lights on Fore St, Okehampton, into George St and then bear right into Castle Rd.

For those walking from the X9 bus stop it is about a quarter of a mile.

If you are travelling by car please share where possible and arrive before 10.30.

The X9 leaves the Bus Station at 9.35 & St David's at 9.45 arriving at Okehampton at 10.25. If you are travelling by bus & are not English Heritage members could you confirm by e-mail or phone (259740) on Sunday 3rd so that I can include you in my group entry.

Admission (over 60) is £3.70 but the group entry price is £3.30.

I will be making a single payment for those in the group so if you wish to be included please make sure you arrive promptly by 10.30 with the correct admission fee. Admission is still possible after I have paid for the group but at the higher rate. The tour will start at 10.45.

Trevor

- 11.00 am Tuesday, 12th April Circular walk from Crediton, via Shobrooke 5 miles**
PACKED LUNCH REQUIRED

Start is from the Crediton Leisure Centre car park. (To get to the leisure centre from the Exeter direction along the A377; past the Crediton Shell station advance up Exeter Road and along Charlotte Street. Just past the Fire Station and before the church, turn right in the direction of Tiverton along East Street. At the end of East Street, turn left into Mill Street, still in the Tiverton direction. The main road swings round to the right into Exhibition Road. Almost immediately a sign for the Leisure Centre directs you right into Commercial Road, follow this past playing fields on your left. Turn left into the Leisure Centre and park somewhere.)

From there we follow a footpath to a foot bridge over the River Creedy. Then past the Creedy Court nursing home, lanes and tracks to Toe Mills. The track goes along the line of the old leat, and "in early spring the verges are a mass of snowdrops". We continue to Shobrooke, Shobrooke church (Anglo-Norman) and up to the top end of Shobrooke Park. The track goes along an avenue of limes and chestnuts and passes above the ornamental lakes, which usually carry a range of water birds. Then back via the path to the Crediton Leisure Centre car park.

John B

- **10.30 am Thursday, 28th April** **Cheriton Bishop (Bluebells)** **9 miles**
PACKED LUNCH REQUIRED

Start in the village hall car park (free), SX772 931.

Woodbrooke Lane, Higher Whitehill Brake, Combe Hall, Burrow Farm, Drewsteington for lunch, Veer Mill Farm, West Ford Farm, Hittisleigh Mill, Southcombe Hill, Four Ways Cross, Cheriton Bishop, Woodleigh cafe for tea.

About 9 miles, 5 hours including stops, hopefully great for bluebells in the wooded valleys, mostly on bridleways and footpaths but rest on quiet lanes. There is a bus service from Exeter to CB which goes on to Okehampton and beyond, but not very frequent.

Tom

- **10.45 am Tuesday, 3rd May** **Newton Abbot** **7 miles**
PACKED LUNCH REQUIRED

Newton Abbot - East Ogwell - Denbury - West Ogwell - Morley Bridge - Newton Abbot. After a short initial climb the walk is gently downhill, on lanes and footpaths. Muddy if wet.

The start is designed to connect with the 39 bus leaving Exeter at 9.30 am, via Barrack Road and Topsham Road and the train from Exmouth 09.23, Topsham 09.35, Exeter Central 09.50, Exeter St Davids 09.56, with connection from Crediton 09.37. Meet at the entrance to Asda (SX 858713), near the bus station, about 15 mins walk from the railway station.

By road, take the A38 to Drum Bridges and the A382 to Newton Abbot. Follow signs to Town Centre then turn right at traffic lights with sign Totnes and Superstore. Turn right again soon for Bradley Lane Industrial Estate and Long Term Car Park at Venture Court. (£3.80 all day.) Some free parking nearby in and off Bradley Lane.

Wait at the ramp at the river end of the long stay car park, the group starting from Asda will pick you up at that point.

David and Lorna

- **10.30 am Tuesday, 7th June** **Ludwell Valley** **4 miles**

Park in the roads around the Tally Ho pub, Countess Wear. GR940904

This moderate walk takes us around the scenic Ludwell Valley with panoramic views over both Exeter and the Exe estuary towards Exmouth. There will be an optional lunch at the Tally Ho Inn.

Trish

- **Tues / Wed, 14th / 15th June** **Dorset Delights**

This will involve walks in the Swanage area on Tuesday and Wednesday, 14&15 June.

On one day we will walk from Corfe Castle along the Purbeck Way to Ballard Down north of Swanage and then back into Swanage. On the other day we will walk another section of the Purbeck Way from a point near Worth Matravers to the South West Coast Path at Chapman's Pool and then along the path to Swanage via Durlleston Head.

Each walk will be about 9/10 miles with a degree of difficulty comparable with last year's Meander rather than the Madness of the previous year.

I need to do some preparatory exploration and would hope to give you some more definite information by Easter time. The dates are fixed if you want to explore accommodation options as are the walks (in general terms unless I meet some unforeseen problems). I also hope that this visit will help me to identify ways in which each walk has a shorter option (6/7 miles).

At the next stage everyone will get an info update but after that details will go only to those who express an interest. One advantage of Swanage (probably not too busy in mid June) is that as a holiday area it might work well for couples where only one is a keen walker (Nude bathing at Studland Bay is a possible alternative).

Trevor

- **Tuesday, 28th June** **East Devon (short)**

This will be a short walk followed by a lunch. Details to be confirmed later.

Alan

RECENT WALKS 2011

Exe Valley Way, north of Thorverton, 10th January

Thirteen held fast to their New Year resolution and turned up for the start at the Ruffwell Inn. We walked into Thorverton and picked up another (local). Regrettably two more cried off claiming to have had a water leak – an unlikely event in the heat wave we have been having.

Undaunted we pressed on up the hill to the top and paused to admire the view – much better than in the very misty conditions when we had walked the route a few years ago. Our pause was fortunate because two others caught us up having been wrong footed by the non-arrival of the Bickleigh – Thorverton bus!

Then it was down amid much groaning because the long hill further on was in full view. However all survived and we lingered at the top full of the feel-good factor and our elevenses.

After that it was a pleasant steady downhill stroll to Bickleigh Castle and the Fisherman's Cot where we all tarried awhile. On the return bus, the rain, originally promised for 6am, arrived so once again fortune favoured the brave.

Trevor

Crediton, Posbury 19th January



The numbers on the train were modest with a few more waiting on the platform at Crediton and I wondered whether the late change of venue had taken its toll. Our leader (John B) had disappeared (who knows why) and so I was amazed to see him return with vast numbers from the nearby car-park – we were 25 in all!

We gave John's wife a cheery wave as we passed his house, dragging David Batty screaming and kicking because he wasn't allowed a coffee stop (after 300 metres). Over the Yeo and then up to Whitstone ridge with wonderful views on a cloudless winter's day. Some of the lanes were icy in the shade so had to be taken with care but John varied this by finding a few (muddy) green lanes taking us up to the extinct Podbury volcano and the convent.

After that it was a long careful descent since the roads were still icy and back along the Yeo over suitably muddy terrain. It was three hours in all and probably 6-7 miles rather than the 4-5 I estimated.

Seven of us had a quick lunch in the Station Café which proved even quicker since the train arrived 7 minutes early. It didn't actually go until the appointed time but it caused sufficient confusion for one of our number to leave without paying. Pete Cann (travelling by car and in no hurry) kindly settled the bill and was then allowed to leave. No doubt UERSA is written in large letters on the wall to help them to remember to refuse service in the future! It would be invidious to mention the name of the miscreant but if he goes AWOL one more time I might forgo my vow of silence.

Many thanks to John for a great walk much enjoyed by everyone.

Trevor

Chagford, 1st February



I don't think I've seen such an up-market village cricket pavilion as that at Chagford but that is where seven walkers joined Tom for the start of one of this season's longer UERSA walks. Setting off in slightly damp conditions, the main challenge of the day came in the first half mile, with a testing 600 foot steep climb to the top of Meldon Hill. While there was a good sight of Chagford down below, it was a shame that low cloud impeded more extensive views. However, over the next half hour the clouds began to lift, and by midday the sun was out and stayed that way for the rest of the walk. This area of Dartmoor looked very picturesque in the winter sunshine as Tom took us down to the longhouses at Lettaford, past two tiny ash houses (a new aspect of Dartmoor architecture for most of us), along lanes to Hele Cross and onto the footpath across the Bovey Castle estate. Here we found a shelter fitted with seats which provided a convenient spot for lunch while we admired the finely manicured golf course. Our appetites filled, we took the gentle incline up to Week Down, by now with terrific visibility all around, and then down a pretty wooded path back into Chagford where there was time for an early cup of tea for some. Tom's pedometer suggested about 9 miles, Pete's around 8½. Whatever, it was a splendid walk in surprisingly warm winter sunshine – the snowdrops even suggested Spring might be round the corner!

David B

Raddon Hills, 17th February



Eleven of us plus Pippin the dog, assembled on February 17th in Thorverton. Across the carpark, the shop, “Not the Village Shop” and next door to it, the Post Office, were open in semi-permanent premises. We set off via a bank of crocuses, daffodils and snowdrops. Then opposite turned up the Cleve Steps, Mike led us along path, muddy from overnight rain, to the gates of Dunsaller, where crocuses were supplemented with cyclamen. We noted the stone marking the site of St. John's (the Baptist) chapel, which was transferred to Crediton cemetery in 1926. Thereafter we passed a low tumulus and walked to Yendacott Manor before ascending on the road from Langford heading to Cheriton Fitzpaine, past the Sanctuary we turned right to a track along the Raddon crest. Lunch was taken below a fence with an expansive but misty view South, while Pippin, who had walked many miles more than we had, introduced herself to everyone in hope of a crumb. From our lunch spot we descended past Raddon Hill Lodge with its twig bird sculpture, through fields, pebbly below with skylarks above, and then of sheep with lambs wearing their plastic coats of various colours. When we had nearly reached the road back to Thorverton, John noticed a small clump of frogspawn on top of a gate. Spring is clearly arriving. At the edge of Thorverton, Elspeth invited us in for a cup of tea. Thanks to Mike for introducing us all to a fresh area.

John + Frankie

Cox Tor, 9th March



On a bright, sunny but windy morning fourteen gathered at the car park for the re-scheduled event. Probably more than last time but, who knows, it was too misty to count.

Pete led us up to Cox Tor, a steady climb to get us warm and, after a brief photo-stop, it was on to Stephen's Grave and White Tor where we lunched. Even though we were sheltered by the rocks it was still cold and we moved on. The terrain was very open with superb views and, surprisingly, incredibly dry. There were occasional soft spots but no sign of oozing water.

We paused at Langmoor Standing Stone – large with a distinctive Zig (or is it Zag) in it and also the nearby stone circle. Then it was a steady descent via Roos and Staple Tors back to the start.

Thanks Pete for an excellent day out.

Trevor