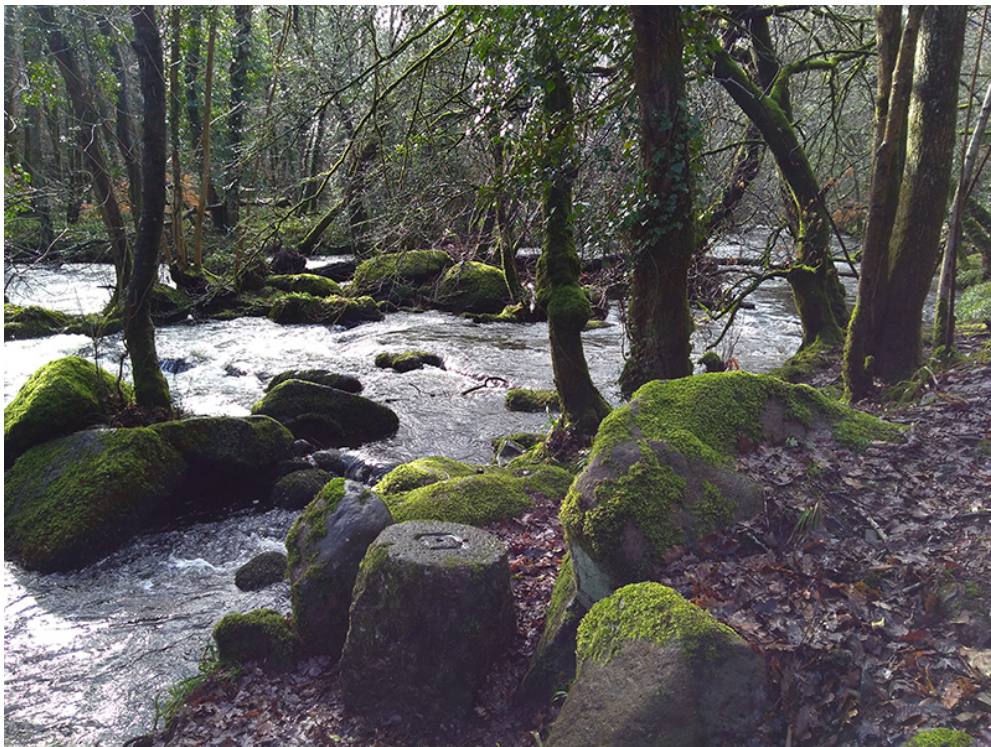


Thursday 7th February, "A Teign Gorge Classic" with Chris Gooding

This proved to be a perfect walk for a winter morning, despite the wind and rain – and only 40 minutes drive away. The route-finding is easy so I can recommend it if you fancy a change from our local muddy walks.

Chris and Erica met us at the free parking up the road from the Fingle Bridge Inn (across the bridge there are some public toilets, hooray!!). In a change of plan, we decided to do the walk in a reverse direction to avoid walking into the wind and rain.

We walked up the river Teign on a dryish though rough path upstream, sheltered by the woods. The Teign was a lovely companion as it tumbled along, and the lush moss and lichens on the trees and rocks made up for the lack of leaves on the trees.



We marvelled at the restored hydro turbine which was restored by the National Trust in 2017. Here is its story (with thanks to the National Trust website!):

"The story of hydroelectric power at Castle Drogo began in 1916. At the same time as Castle Drogo was being built Julius Drewe wrote to Gilbert Gilkes and Co. (a well-established engineering company specialising in hydro-electricity generation) to enquire whether it was possible on the river Teign.

Work didn't actually start until 1927, Sir Edwin Lutyens designed the building and

Gilbert Gilkes and Co. installed 2 turbines. By March 1929 the turbines were producing electricity which supplied the castle. There were 332 electrical plug sockets installed throughout the castle to power all of the gadgets in Julius Drewe's thoroughly modern home.

The majority of the original infrastructure was found to be sound and reusable. The 2 Francis turbines were sensitively restored and the concrete pipe which takes the water from the weir to the turbine house was still in good condition.

As well as restoration, the project also required the installation of new elements, including a state of the art intake screening system, which will ensure that fish and eels cannot enter the turbine system. A new cable was also installed to bring the power directly to the visitor centre.

The turbine house was commissioned in late October 2017 and has been generating electricity ever since, as long as there is sufficient water in the river Teign.

The electricity is used by the visitor centre and any excess is used to heat one of the boilers in the biomass house so there is no waste."

There is more interesting detail here: <https://finglewoods.org.uk/2016/12/19/water-power/>

From the turbine it was a short walk to the weir and footbridge where we saw a dipper, the only bird on the fast flowing river that morning. Then without crossing the river we headed away from the river, up hill, to the famous "Hunter's Path". It is a steep climb up, but worth it as the views from the path across the Teign Gorge are beautiful, as are those towards Chagford with Dartmoor beyond.

We followed the Hunters Path with Castle Drogo towering above us, and gradually descended back to the road and our cars. A quick change of footwear, and then to the Fingle Bridge Inn for a well-earned lunch.

Thanks to Chris and Erica for this gem of a walk!

Penny Kurowski