

Bedwyn Footpaths Group walk – Sunday 17th November, 11.00 am. 4 miles

Collingbourne Woods and Ludgershall Castle. Parking St James St Car park, Ludgershall

In November 21 members of our group went on an away-day to Ludgershall and this walk took us through a different woodland, now with the foliage colour of the trees fading a little and revealing the trunks and branches in all their glory. Members Kevin and Ros have lived in Ludgershall for many years and know the area well. They planned a splendid walk for us to Collingbourne Woods, returning to Ludgershall for a visit to the castle and a substantial Sunday lunch at The Queens Head. They even arranged a dry day for us!

The 4 mile walk begins in Ludgershall and weaves around the fields of the old Royal Hunting Grounds and into the lovely peaceful Collingbourne Woods before emerging and returning to the 11th century castle ruins, where it is possible to walk around the grass bank of the ramparts if you wish.

The tracks in the woods are hard surface. There are no stiles and no steep hills

Many of us commented, myself included, that we had driven through Ludgershall many times but never taken the time to visit the castle despite its location close to the road, free and open all year round. It's a late medieval fortress, restored by King John, then inherited by Henry III who from 1234 transformed it into a royal residence which he visited 21 times to enjoy the local hunting. In 1236 he gave the castle as a wedding present to his wife, Queen Eleanor.

The castle is currently under the care of English Heritage and is well worth a visit. The ruined tower is still standing and the foundations of the walls of the royal chambers which were excavated in the 1960s & 70s can be seen. I was quite impressed that each of the 3 royal chambers had its own latrine attached – en-suite facilities are nothing new – well not if you're a royal!

