

BELLEVER TO YAR TOR VIA SOUSSON WOOD AND RETURN VIA EAST DART RIVER

START POINT GRID REF: 656 773

We offered two walks on the 8th Oct 00, both starting and finishing at Bellever Car Park not far from Postbridge, the shorter walk was led by Helen Rowett with 19 walkers and the longer 10.5 mile walk led by Fran Allen which started with 27 in the group.

The numbers venturing out shows the popularity of two walks accommodating those who like the more leisurely pace as well as those who want a slightly longer walk.



The longer walk is described here and the outline of the route taken is shown above. As usual it should be related to a 1:25000 ordnance survey map of the area such as the outdoor leisure map no 28 together with the description of the walk given below in order to gain a good appreciation of the actual route taken.

The last time Helen and Fran had led two walks together it had tipped down all day and the visibility was all of 20 yards. This Autumn walk was blessed with fine sunny weather, in the morning and excellent visibility.



After a briefing from both leaders at the car park in the woods at Bellever we were off at just gone 10 AM. Fran set a cracking pace initially as the intention was for both groups to meet for lunch together up on Corndon Down at about midday. The faster walkers had to walk much further than those with Helen, hence the pace.

At the back Fran was ably supported by her back markers, Peter and Joan, who ensured that all kept up the pace, by verbally "nipping the heels" of those who dared consider slowing down. I have it on good authority that at least three people reverted to the short walk within 300 yards of the start. Who needs sheepdogs with Pete and

Joan around!! We left the woods and followed the road over Bellever Bridge straddling the East Dart River.

We were only on the road for a few yards before turning left and making our way north east across slowly rising ground alongside a small stream which flowed into the main river.

We were making quite good progress with easy walking.

About 15 minutes after leaving the road we made our way through the very small hamlet of Pizwell, oddly the farm carried the Cornish plaque of the balls on a black background, had the Cornish captured this part of Dartmoor for themselves?



We followed the track from Pizwell due north up to Runnage Bridge and when we crossed the bridge we stopped for morning coffee.

A few minutes later we were on our way again heading virtually due east into Soussons Wood.

Although quite muddy in places we were still maintaining a fair pace through the conifer wood as the

path gradually rose.

We crossed other paths heading south and followed a footpath sign which would have taken us to Sousson's farm had we continued on it.

We met another narrow road heading south and followed it with the wood on our right hand side.

Before long we were exiting the wood through a gate onto a small road by a point named on the map as Ephraim's Pinch, what a strange name.



Fran led us now west along a narrow but easy path for a couple of hundred yards before we met an intersecting bridlepath heading due south.

We followed this bridlepath across open grazing land avoiding some of the mud, but after all the rain it was inevitably rather wet in places.

We were on the bridlepath for approaching a mile as we passed by Cator Common.

We left the bridlepath where it crossed a narrow country lane and turned south east.

We followed this quiet country lane for the best part of a mile and were maintaining the pace necessary to meet with Helen's group for lunch.

We continued south passing the road junction to Middle Cator and shortly after left the road where it swung south east. We continued onto moorland again maintaining our general southerly path.

We were soon gaining ground as we made our way onto Corndon Down.



Shortly after getting onto the down we met another group of walkers making their way in the opposite direction. Plenty of banter ensued as we recognised them as being the Dartmoor Ramblers, a group of walkers who also walk with us on Sundays.

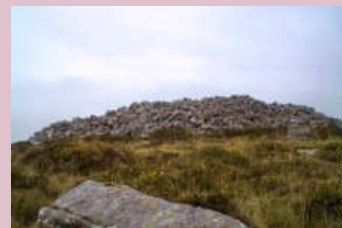
We seemed to be walking more quickly than them, although of course there were some strong denials of the suggestion I made.

After 15 minutes or so, in the distance on a Tor, we could see Helen's group who were already at the lunch meeting point by a cairn/tor. We could also see rather large black clouds a mile or so away and the clouds were heading towards us.

We arrived at the Tor, at 420 metres above sea level, for lunch at just after midday and Helen's group had arrived about 15 minutes earlier. Shortly after our arrival, the dark clouds were overhead and the first of the heavy rain showers of the day was with us.

By this time 11 of Fran's group decided that they would join Helen for the shorter route home in view of the weather but there were still about 17 of us on the longer walk.

This was entirely due to the weather and nothing to do with the backmarking pair and their heel nipping activities.



From the relative warmth of the sunny morning we were now quite cold with the wind up and the rain cooling us rather too quickly. The moods of Dartmoor can change quickly.

Rather than cool down too much Fran truncated the break slightly and we were on our way up to another cairn a few metres higher at 434 metres.



From the cairn we turned left and headed across east to Corndon Tor from where there were spectacular views out across the moors.

I was surprised that we were only about a mile from Venford Reservoir with Tor unusually shaped Sharp Tor in between the reservoir and our vantage point.

From Corndon Tor we headed south west across roughish moor before we picked up an easier path which headed west and across towards Yar Tor.

En route we met a distinctive large cross on its own large plinth, not an ancient stone cross this but a memorial to a 19 year old lad who had perished in action during the first world war.



We crossed a small road and headed up towards Yar Tor sitting at 400 metres.

Since some of the group had cut out a section of the walk in getting to Yar Tor, Fran allowed the rest of us a quick couple of minutes break up at Yar Tor before the next section of the route.

What goes up must also come down and from Yar Tor there was a very steep descent down towards the East Dart below us.

There were quite a few cars near us and the map showed that we were quite close to the local beauty spot of Dartmeet where the East and West Dart join together.

Down in the valley below is we could see another car park at Badger's Holt, another beauty where I was advised there was a good line in cream teas in the season.



We descended steeply very close to the Badger's Holt car park and swung right as we again found ourselves walking along the side of the East Dart river.



For the next half mile we followed our way up and along the east bank of the river and after all the recent rain there was plenty of water in the river making for some splendid sights as we made out way north.

Naturally another benefit of the recent rains was the mud and there was plenty of that as well, still that's what walking boots are designed for and we all ploughed our way happily enough through the glutinous stuff.

About a half mile north of Badger's Holt the main river veered west and we followed the side of a brook, ignoring a ford across some water covered stepping stones and following the east side of a brook until we found an easy crossing over a very small clapper bridge.



Just beyond the clapper bridge Fran gave us a short afternoon break. We allowed some horse riders to go by and then we were off along a small road for a very short distance before taking the track up towards the moor again passing Babeny Farm and stables. Again, very strange, another Cornish coat of arms, I really must find out why??.



The track took us up towards the moors heading north west before it descended again towards Laughter Hole House on the other side of the East Dart River. There were some splendid stepping stones to traverse to get to the house but Fran had planned the walk to keep to the east side of the East Dart back to Bellever.

From the stepping stones it was about a mile along the river bank back to Bellever Bridge. Because of the boggy ground not far from the river we followed a meandering and stony route very close to the river itself, although not difficult it didn't make for easy walking.

About a third of the way along the map indicated Whiteslade (Snaily House). It is in fact a derelict cottage fifty yards back from the the river where lived two sisters who apparently lived on a diet mainly consisting of snails and little else, perhaps someone knew of Jack's penchant for French cuisine following his recent month long expedition to that country and wanted him to feel at home.

The path improved again as we neared Bellever Bridge and we noticed that there was an old clapper bridge just downstream of the main road bridge we crossed just under five hours before.

We crossed the bridge again, turned left and retraced our steps back to the car park set back in Bellever Woods at the end of the walk.



It had been another good walk in an area that I, for one, hadn't walked before. It completed yet another section of the moors and thanks to both Fran and Helen for putting on such an interesting and varied walk. The fact that it attracted 46 walkers indicated the popularity of having dual length walks on the walks list.

We had kept up a good pace covering the 10.5 miles in about 5 hours including breaks and although we had had some rain, it hadn't dampened the enthusiasm of the group.

We soon dried off on our way back to Plymouth to try to remember all the sights we had seen and the places we had visited on the walk.