

**BELSTONE COMMON, OKE TOR, STEEPERTON TOR AND RETURN VIA
COSDON BEACON
START POINT: BELSTONE CP GRID REF 621938**

The Plymouth Ramblers Sunday walkers very rarely walk from Belstone on the North Fringe of Dartmoor and even more unusually to walk with the North Devon Group. The walk on the 14th Apr 02 may even be a first when we linked in with North Devon for the walk from Belstone south to beyond Steeperton Tor and then back along the ridge to Cosden Beacon before the drop to Belstone.

Thanks are due to the North Devon group and in particular to the leader, Tony, for making the six of the Plymouth Group who ventured to Belstone in the rain so welcome on the day.

Luckily the rain stopped by about midday so we had a chance of drying out.

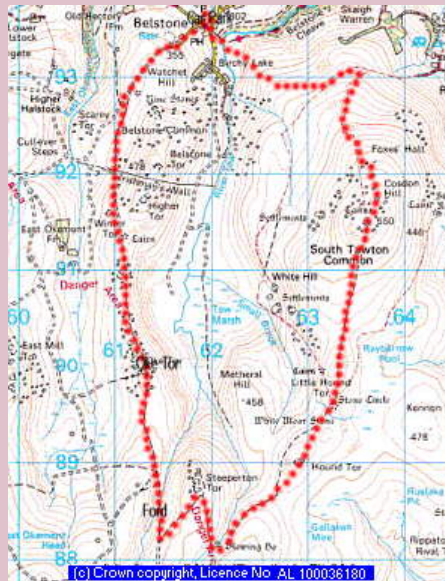


The car park at Belstone was really full when we arrived at 10 AM for a 10.30 start with over 50 ramblers milling around. We were amazed to see so many walkers out from North Devon.

We soon found out that the Teignmouth Group were also starting a walk from the car park, even so including the six from Plymouth, there were 28 ramblers out for the walk.

Considering that the North Devon group had travelled 40 miles to get here and the Plymouth Group over 30 miles it was an impressive number to get out.

An outline of the 11 mile route we took on the day is shown below. To best appreciate the route this outline should be viewed in conjunction with a 1:25000 map of the area such as the the outdoor leisure map no 28 of Dartmoor published by the Ordnance Survey.



At 10.30 AM we left the car park and made our way up through the village of Belstone.

The village has some lovely old houses and even has it's own stocks for ramblers who get out of line. We passed the village triangle, a variant of the village green and continued up through the village passing some really impressive old buildings en route.

At one point we passed a beautiful tree, possibly a magnolia, in full bloom, and amazing sight.



Belstone supports two churches and several other large buildings so must have been a real centre in the old mining days. The history of Belstone certainly merits further research.



One which caught my eye was the old telegraph office with it's old red telephone box and post box there to remind us of yesteryear.

We were soon out of the village and heading up a track with Belstone Common and Tor off to our right.

Soon we were stopping to put on more wet weather gear as the rain became heavier, luckily only for a relatively short period of time though.

We reached the crest of the hill and started to descend. Despite the weather the views were magnificent in excellent visibility. Down over the hill in the distance we could see a wood and the remains of the Irishmans Wall.

Soon we intersected another track and turned left and followed the track uphill heading south up towards Oke Tor. Although we were climbing it was an easy climb and we were soon at Oke Tor and ready for our morning coffee break.

After coffee we continued to head south along a track. Across the valley off to our right was Steeperton Tor, and from the side we were walking we could see how well it merited its name.

Our approach to it though was rather easier than some of those who were practicing for the 10 Tors and were go straight up the steepest side. That brought back some painful memories for me, but that's another story.



We continued on south and began to descend slightly down a badly rutted track heading for Knack Mine Ford over the river xxx.

Once across the Ford we continued our ascent up the rutted track leaving Steeperton Tor behind us.

After a few hundred yards we came to another track heading only about 40 degrees to the direction we had come up.

This was the easy route up towards Steeperton Tor.

The ascent was easy enough, far easier than I remember and after a half a mile or so we reached Steeperton Tor and our lunch break.

The Gods were smiling on us and the rain abated and kept off for the rest of the day.

After a 30 minute break we were on our way again, leaving Steeperton Tor and contouring around a valley between us and Hound Tor.



On our way around the top of the valley we came upon an old miners shelter which, although roofless, still had walls in quite good condition.

We stopped to admire the tiny shelter and the made our way across another stream which tumbled down from the higher moors.

This walk was relatively stream free, apart from the Knack Mine Ford this was the only stream we had to cross without the aid of bridges on the whole walk. Quite unusual!!

Once across the stream we made our way north towards Hound Tor on the ridge path linking Hangingstone Hill, about a mile south of us and Cosden Beacon, a point we would be visiting on the walk.

We stopped at Hound Tor to admire the splendid vistas afforded over the Northern Moor.



Once we had regathered at the Tor we were off again follow the ridge track.

Before long we came across an old stone circle, the only one we could see in this area of the moor, much more common though a few miles further south.

Up to another Tor we walked, this time Little Hound Tor and then for a climb on up towards Cosdon

Beacon, a prominent landmark.

Cosdon Beacon marked the end of ascent on the walk, What we go up we also come down and so the last section was definitely a steep downhill section.

As we were to find out, the old shelters provided a haven once for miners and moorman.

In these modern days a new breed of moorman was using the shelter by Cosdon Beacon.



Four walkers, nothing to do with the North Devon Group were encamped in the shelter, the moor variant of a cafe I guess.

We made our way along by the Beacon itself and then came the descent.

We headed steeply downhill and below us we could

see the village of Stickleback.

We descended in the direction of this village for a half mile before we swung left and headed back around the contours on our way back towards the village of Belstone across the valley with the River Taw running through it.



We managed to avoid the worst of a bog on our way down, more than I had done the last time I had visited the area.



After a further half a mile Belstone was clearly visible and we made our way down from Belstone along an easy to follow track and to the final zig zag descent to the bridge of the River Taw.

It was time for the group picture.

We gathered by the bridge for Jack Sycamore, one of the Plymouth to try out his new toy, a high

spec digital camera.

Jack took three pictures which he merged into a single panorama shot of the complete group.

As you can see he did manage it although I have had to reduce the size and in consequence the definition considerably to get it to a size suitable for the net



If any of the group would like a larger and a very much more detailed picture please let me know and Jack or I will get the digital picture to you.

After the "school photo" we crossed over the bridge and then up the track towards Belstone.

The track rose quite sharply and reminded us that it wasn't in fact quite all downhill from Cosdon Beacon after all. Soon we were on a narrow but metalled road and we were entering the village for the final few hundred yards again back into the car park.

We passed the village green, the Methodist Church, the stocks and then on around the corner to the car park once again.

We had started the walk at 10.30 and it was 3.45 by the time we returned to the cars again.

It had been a good walk, everyone had enjoyed themselves and there were plenty of thank you's to the North Devon Group for inviting us. Yes and 'we must do this again soon' comments from the North Devon and Plymouth members.

It is nice to be able to meet other ramblers particularly the two most geographically separated groups in the Devon Area. Yes, we really must do this again before too long. A good day out for all concerned.

