

**BOLVENTOR CHURCH, PRIDDACOMBE DOWN, BUTTER'S TOR, KING
ARTHUR'S HALL, ROUGH TOR, BROWN WILLY AND RETURN VIA
TOLBOROUGH DOWN
START POINT: BOLVENTOR CHURCH CAR PARK GRID REF: 181765**

On 15th Dec 00 three ramblers travelled out to Bolventor and Jamaica Inn to recce a 12 to 13 mile walk from Bolventor, via Brown Willy, Rough Tor to King Arthurs' Hall and back.

Once again due to the ravages of foot and mouth disease it had to be rereccied and was finally walked on Wednesday 24th October 01, over 10 months after the original recce.



An outline of the route we took is shown above, it should be related to the OS 1:25000 explorer 109 map of Bodmin Moor to gather a full appreciation of the route we took.

On the day of the walk 14 ramblers made it to the start point, despite forecasts of a front passing through. Of course the forecasters were right we had thunder, heavy rain showers, hail and winds of about 40 kts at the top of the two Tors visited.

Bolventor is only a 45 minute drive from Plymouth no more than a trip across Dartmoor to Warren House Inn. Why don't we visit Bodmin Moor more frequently. The answer lies in the fact that Dartmoor is a National Park whereas Bodmin Moor is in the main privately owned and lacks the formally agreed Access areas one now almost takes for granted on Dartmoor.

The difficulty of access on Bodmin moor led to two reccies being necessary for this walk, the first as long ago as December 2000 with the second in September 2001. John Smith was keen to make this a circular walk and whilst getting out to Brown Willy was relatively easy getting back from King Arthurs Hall by a different route proved rather difficult to achieve.

We managed it in the end but will feel much happier about the route when the access promised by the CROW legislation is with us in a few years time.

On the day we decided to walk it in the opposite direction, that is to go via Priddacombe Down and leave the Tors until towards the end of the walk.

We set off at 10 PM, walked north east from Bolventor church along the road which runs parallel and alongside the A30 for a hundred yards or so until we came to a footpath sign, taking us down hill and away from the noisy A30.



At the bottom of the hill was a very tranquil scene of two ponds with a footbridge taking us over them. This footpath was leading us through someones private garden, but a public right of way it was so we continued. We continued on along the path and then fifty yards or so later we climbed over a stile and into a field.

The footpath actually was unusable at the lower corner of the field as it disappeared into a marsh. We were forced to divert round a nearby farm, currently disused and pick up the footpath again on the other side.



We were soon climbing over a stile over a hedge and onto a narrow lane leading us up and onto Priddacombe Down, now owned by English Nature.

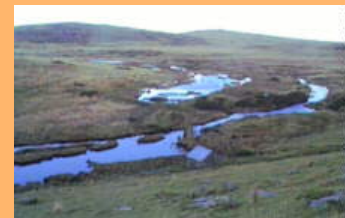
At the end of the track we came to a gate leading into a field full of sheep. On the recce there was a polite notice asking walkers to 'please shut the gate '. This sign had now been removed as can be seen in the picture.

Our assumption was that this was the route out onto Priddacombe Down but because of the complete lack of footpath signs in the area it was impossible to determine precisely where the public footpath started.

The view from the gate was good and we could see both Brown Willy and Rough Tor in the distance, our target Tors on this walk.

We continued across the field of sheep exiting via a another gate onto Priddacombe Down.

We walked west up and over Priddacombe Down and towards forestry plantation land in the distance. Although wet underfoot, we soon reached the side of the wood, climbed over a wire fence and we walked along the side of the wood for a hundred yards before turning right and heading down towards a derelict farm east of Butter's Tor.



Off to our right we could see some large pools and in the distance ahead of us was Brown Willy and across a valley to the west was Rough Tor.

We were not heading towards the two Tors yet and we swung around the base of Butter's Tor until we found a permissive path, signs at last.



There were posts to guide us around the Tor and in the direction of Garrow Farm and a Tor of that name.

We first had to cross the De Lank River and there were two sturdy wooden bridges to help us over the river.

We followed the well used permissive track up a steep but short incline to the entrance to the disused farm.

There was a plaque indicating that we had been walking on a permissive path which runs right up to the top of Brown Willy and down the other side to the De Lank river.

On the OS map there is a public footpath shown which passes right alongside Garrow Farm and on down to the De Lank more or less east of Garrow Tor.

It appears that this ROW is now not used as the permissive path gives a much easier route across and up the Brown Willy.



We followed the clearly defined footpath away from the farm entrance heading generally west, circling around Garrow Tor and down.

After a few hundred yards we entered a small copse, over a stile through the narrow copse and then out via a narrow bridge over a brook and then onto open moorland or rather downs again.

We climbed uphill over a stile and onto the down and then headed west again. John stopped to show us a couple of stone circles and a few hundred yards further along we came to a rectangular enclosure, surrounded by a fence which was King Arthurs' Hall.

King Arthur's Hall is quite impressive, particularly when one realises just how ancient it might be, perhaps Neolithic even at 2500 yrs BC. On the recce, we climbed over the stile at the far end and walked around the edge of this rectangular compound wondering just what it might have been like all those thousands of years ago.



John advised us that the history of this enclosure was uncertain but that many archaeological historians considered that it was once an animal enclosure in medieval times and had no real links to the King Arthur legend.

On the actual walk, we stopped to admire the stones and then headed north across King Arthurs' Down, passing close by a pool by a wall and on northwards to Louden Hill across Candra Down.

En route we passed several artifacts including more stone circles.



About a mile or so from King Arthurs Hall we came upon a track which meandered round towards the pools we had passed to the east of Butter's Tor. This track had been constructed by SWW to provide access to their site near the pools.

We followed the line of the track generally eastwards with some very well preserved Kistvaens off to the left and further on to the right we came upon another kistvaen which appeared to be the grave of an adult and child in

separate granite lined holes in the ground.

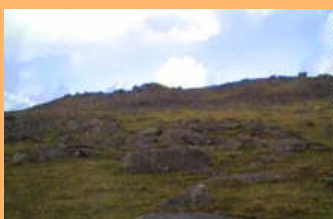
We stopped just before the second of the kistvaens for a quick lunch, cut short by the first of the vicious hail showers we were to experience off and on for the remainder of the walk.

Following the line of the track we descended down over a brook and then headed off to the left, leaving the track and headed up towards a very large and distinctive stone circle.

John advised us that this was the largest stone circle on the whole of Bodmin Moor.



Ahead of us was the imposing Rough Tor and our goal was the top of the Tor.



We didn't head directly up but skirted round the eastern side of the Tor and then made our way up, still very steep but far less severe than the 'direct' route.

When we started the ascent the top of Rough Tor was in cloud and the heavy rain certainly made the climb rather hard.

Eventually, when we got to the top of the Tor the views were excellent but we were certainly buffeted by the strong wind.

We were also surprised to find that we were not alone, there were about 8 others at the top, below us off to the west there was a large clay pit and to the right we could see a car park, Rough Tor Car Park with a path leading from it up to the Tor.

The whole of the Rough Tor Area is now National Trust property. I found it quite surprising to find a small section of around Rough Tor now owned by the NT whereas almost the whole of the rest of the moor is privately owned.



A plaque at the top of Rough Tor indicates how the Tor and surrounding land came to the NT. It indicates how the Tor was given to the nation in memory of those from the 45th Wessex Division who lost their lives the country during the North West European campaign towards the end of the second world war.

We didn't stay at the top overly long, although the views were excellent, the wind was far too strong for a long stay. We descended down from the highest granite rocks and headed north along the ridge passing Little Rough Tor and then Showery Tor en route.

There is a good example of a cheesewring stone at Showery Tor.



This was as far north as we would be going on this walk, we turned south east and headed down a relatively easy descent to a bridge over the De Lank river and the steep ascent up the permissive path to the top of the highest point of Cornwall, Brown Willy, towering some 450 ft above us.

The Tor is privately owned and a polite notice asked us to keep to the permissive track. This proved almost impossible as the farmers' cattle had turned to lower section of the path into an absolute quagmire and we were forced to go to the side of the path to avoid the worst of the mud.

With the winter not yet with us, I shudder to think how bad this mudbath will become when the ravages of the winter are with us.

The climb to the top of the Tor was quite hard and many stopped by the stile half way up to regain their breath, and of course to admire the views. A group of us kept the pace up all the way to the top and to the trig point right at the top.

I climbed up the loose granite to the actual trig point and was blown over by the force of the wind, it really was that strong.



A few seconds admiring the views was sufficient in the very strong wind and then down again to the shelter of a rock outcrop for afternoon tea.



If the ascent from the De Lank had been steep the descent down the eastern side was almost a scramble and quite difficult in places over the wet granite. However we all made it down and across a clearly marked track out over a stile and on to the open moor once again.

We turned right and headed SSE along a track which ran alongside a barbed wire fence, obviously the farmer doesn't want people entering his land on Brown Willy Downs

It was relatively level, if wet in places, as we continued south, although there was an uphill section as we walked alongside Catshole Tor and Catshole Downs.

Another uphill section as we approached Tolborough Down and Tolborough Tor off to the east.

The walking became just a little tussocky in this area as we descended down to a gate and down along a narrow stony track.

After a couple of hundred yards we exited the lane via a gate alongside a farm and followed the lane down to a footpath sign over a stile and into a field.

You may easily miss the sign however as it is obscured by farm machinery left there on a permanent basis or so it seems from my three visits.



It was all uphill from here following the footpath though a couple of fields as it approached the A30 dual carriageway.

Two or three hundred yards of uphill through fields and we exited via a gate/stile onto the road leading to Bolventor Church.

We turned right and followed the road down towards the car park, passing the footpath we had taken at the start of the walk that had led us out and onto Priddacombe Down some five to six hours earlier.



Was there really a Bolventor Church ? We hadn't seen one at all and yet the signpost had indicated one.

Anyone who continued on a few yards past the car park would have found it tucked back around the corner, as can be seen from the photograph.

Yes the weather had been bad at times but we had some sunshine as well. It had been an interesting walk particularly for those who hadn't visited the two highest Tors on Bodmin Moor before.

We gave our thanks to John Smith, the leader for the day and then were off for the 30 mile drive back to Plymouth.

As usual the bridge caused a tail back through the Saltash Tunnel, hopefully this holdup will soon be a thing of the past as the bridge is scheduled for completion in the near future.