

BOVEY TRACEY TO SHAPTOR ROCKS ON 2 OCT 99

GRID REFERENCE: 783815

Bovey Tracey is located off the A38 about 25 miles east of Plymouth on the eastern extremity of the Dartmoor National Park. It is also close to the HQ of the Dartmoor National Park Authority.

There are many local beauty spots in the area, Becky Falls, Lustleigh Cleave to name but two. The walk didn't take us to either of those, but kept to the Bovey and to the east of the river for the steep uphill section. Those areas are covered in descriptions of walks in the series of illustrated walks on and around Dartmoor titled 'Skirting Lustleigh Cleave and the River Bovey' and 'Hound Tor, Becky Falls and Bowermans Nose'



An outline of the route we took is given above. This outline should be related to a suitable 1:25000 ordnance survey map of the area in order to properly appreciate the lanes and footpaths we followed.

About 15 of us gathered at the car park in the centre of Bovey Tracey at 10.30 AM for the start of the 9 mile walk. There had been a late change of leader and Margaret Hancock had taken on the responsibility very late in the day.

The numbers were down on the normal group size. Perhaps it was the weather or the Plymouth Waterfront walk or that some of the members were on a short break walking holiday up on Quantocks.

The walk was repeated, but with minor variations, in mid October 2000 led by Tony Warren in quite similar weather conditions and this time 31 ramblers came along.

Bovey Tracey lies in a valley and we were heading up to a high point at Shapton Rocks therefore the first five miles or so were to be quite a steady climb.

Leaving the car park, we made our way to the B3387 road and then after a couple of hundred yards turned off right and into a rather nice country park. During this section we had the first of the many showers we were to meet on the walk. We headed in a north easterly direction and were soon passing a rather large imposing house, which is the headquarters of the Dartmoor National Park Authority.

We were very close to a Rare Breeds Farm, a local tourist spot. We saw little of it since we were still in woods. Following a well defined path, we continued our ascent and were running roughly parallel to the river Bovey with the river below us and to our right in the valley. After an hour or so we stopped for coffee with rather nice views down the valley.



After the break we continued our path generally upwards through the woods.

Leaving the footpath and turning right, we came across a pair of imposing cottages with a walled garden marking the entrance to another country estate at Shewte. A steep downhill section followed for a short period and we crossed the Bovey, turned left over the bridge and continued our steady climb up the valley, but now on the northern side of the river and heading north west.

We were quite close to the village of Lustleigh and we passed some very big and imposing houses with well manicured extensive lawns.

A few hundred yards beyond the houses we turned sharp right and we were uphill with a vengeance. The path here was very rough and quite steep and obviously a lot of water had been rushing down through recently since there was plenty of evidence of scouring around. After a sharp uphill climb we were back on tarmac again and after a further half mile we were at Slade Cross on the A382 which leads to Mortonhampstead.



Crossing the road, we passed a farm and then turned right through the right of way by the farm. This section used to be very muddy and quite slippery in places. The farm seems to have now closed and in consequence the path is much easier now than it once was. We made our way along the with only a gentle incline for a while. Ahead of us there was a new looking housing development with some quite large houses with their gardens in the process of being developed.

This once was the site of Hawksmoor isolation hospital, where patients with tuberculosis from all over South Devon including Plymouth were brought. There is no sign of the hospital now, all replaced with the new housing development. The footpath ran along the back of the estate with signs warning people to keep out, private property, indicating no entrance.

We turned left down a path and by a brook and then entered Shaptor Woods, an area managed by the Woodland Trust. There was a short but very steep ascent through the woods, with some clearly signed directions to guide us.

In the woods as we climbed there was plenty of evidence of mining with mine shafts surrounded by fencing and barbed wire to our right and left.



After 20 minutes of climbing, we could see some rocks above us and we made our way up and over the low flat rocks to the high vantage point for lunch. The views from Shaptor Rocks were excellent and we could see Bovey Tracey lying well below us in the valley, Newton Abbot in the distance and even Berry Head could be made out.

We could see the dark clouds approaching and lunch was taken with the rain coming down to cool our coffee. There was little or no cover here so we had to grin and bear it. As we could see from our high vantage point, it was to be all downhill from here!!!

Because of the weather, we were soon on our way again, initially through woods and then fields. As we came across a road down we passed by a rather nice pool with large gunnera plant behind it.

We followed a narrow road down south for a few hundred yards before we turned east and made our way down a very steep bridle track. Luckily it was soft underfoot and therefore relatively easy on the joints, despite the steepness.



After this steep half mile descent, we were back on narrow country track road again walking by Stonelands with a superbly landscaped area below the house with 3 large ponds at different levels.

We continued to descend but less steep than before. A half a mile on and we were back on the Bovey Tracey to Mortonhampstead Road (A382) once again. Although Bovey was only one mile away down the road we headed off in the opposite direction, towards Mortonhampstead.

This was a busy road and we had to take care with many cars passing by. Luckily we were on it for less than a half mile before we turned off to the left and followed a narrow road with no cars down into the valley again. Before we reached the river Bovey we found a disused railway, pre Beeching it had linked Newton Abbot to Mortonhampstead.

On the 1999 walk we followed the disused line back to Bovey Tracey and the footpath by the side of the Bovey for the November 2000 walk.

After so many ups and downs we finished with a gentle descent down the valley to our destination, Bovey Tracey. We were in woods for most of the way back and for part of the way we were walking along with the Bovey running just below us. We followed the line for a mile and arrived back on the A382 just on the outskirts of Bovey Tracey.

A few hundred yards more and we were back at the car park again, and just before 3.30 PM saying our farewells and removing the layers of wet weather gear we had donned during the walk.

Thanks to Margaret for leading the walk at such short notice, she had led us over quite a meandering route for the 9 mile walk, with barely a false step. I think I would have got horribly lost if I had attempted that!!