

BURRATOR, MEAVY TO NEAR GUTTER TOR

START POINT: BURRATOR QUARRY GRID REF: 551680

The Burrator area is always a popular one for varied walks since it is a visually beautiful area and is also relatively close to Plymouth.

In late April and early May there is also another attraction, a magnificent carpet of true English bluebell in Burrator Wood about a half a mile to the south of the Dam.

The walk is one which Jack Sycamore has organised for the last three years at least and it always attracts a good number of walkers. On Sunday 11th May 2003 we had approaching 30 walkers out for the 9 mile walk through woods fields and moorland.



An outline of the walk is given above. The outline should be followed in conjunction with a 1:25000 Ordnance survey map of the area such as the Outdoor Leisure map no 28 of Dartmoor.



We met at Burrator Quarry car park which is only 200 metres or so from the Burrator Dam on the road to the reservoir from Dousland.

Jack gave his customary briefing and we were soon on our way out of the Quarry and along the country road to the toilets just before the dam.

We met members of the Tavistock group by the dam, they too were off to see the bluebells in the woods on a six mile walk.

Leaving them we took the zig zag track which led us down into the steep valley immediately below the dam.

It is a magnificent sight from this angle and it indicates just how deep the reservoir actually is when it is full.



Turning away from the dam there is an easy to follow path right down through the valley which leads down directly to the village of Meavy.



Exiting the footpath onto the road, we turned left and made our way to the stepping stones over the River Meavy.

These stones are quite big and can be hazardous when wet as one or two of our group have found out by taking an early bath in the river.

Most of us crossed via the stepping stones although a few wisely decided to follow the road around and go over the bridge instead.

Once across the river by the bridge or the stepping stones we continued up the lane for a couple of hundred metres before reaching Marchant's Cross.

At this point the "main" lane veered to the right and we took the left fork on upto the Yeo Farm area.



The lane in the area of Yeo farm is most certainly no access, as signs clearly indicate just along the road by the farm and again at the top of the lane above the farm



In the place of the now out of bounds path along the road, there is a public right of way, via what looks like a corral , across a bridge up into the woods.

The PROW then turns left, across a stile and on up along the side of a field and over another stile before emerging onto the lane again.

We followed the rough lane uphill for a couple of hundred metres when we moved off the track and onto a short section of footpath.

This led us, via a large stile into Burrator Woods and its promised carpet of bluebells.

There are masses of English Bluebells in the wood and the area is very very popular at this time of year for the bluebells.

We admired the bluebells as we made our way along the narrow track up through the woods and then for a short steep ascent before leaving the woods via another largish stile.

The footpath went along the side of a field for a few metres, over yet another large stone stile over a hedge and into a field where there were several large stones.



This was an ideal spot for morning coffee with the ready made stone seats.



After a 10 minute break we were on our way again heading ENE along the side of the field before going in via a gate across a field.

At this point there are magnificent views of Sheepstor village with the large church by far the largest building there.

Sitting behind the church, albeit a half a mile away is the majestic rocky outcrop of Sheepstor itself, a truly magnificent Tor.

We admired the sight as we descended across the field and exiting via a rough unmade up lane, onto the lane leading down from Ringmore Down to Sheepstor itself.

Our route took us up this steep lane and inevitably we got a little spread out as we made our way steeply uphill toward the Down. After 300 to 400 metres of uphill we crossed the cattle grid up onto the start of the open moors.



We left the road and headed south east up across the open moor across another road and on upto a gate in the distance which leads on to Ringmore Down.



The whole of the Down is fenced in, we didn't climb the gate but instead we turned left and made our way along the side of the fenced area making our way along relatively level contours towards Gutter Tor about 1500 metres to the east of us.

When we were level with Gutter Tor we climbed across a stile at the corner between two barbed wire fences.

We took great care since the top of the stile had barbed wire across it, all too easy to snag up on it.

Once over the stile we descended north east down to the small Gutter Tor car park at the end of the country lane.

We made our way across a stone bridge across a stream and made our way along a rough track which leads all the way back to Princetown.

We only stayed on it for about 150 metres until we passed the Scout Hut copse and crossed over a stone bridge over an empty leat.



Immediately we were over the leat we turned left and headed north with the leat to our left.



We followed the line of the leat until it swung off to the north west.

We continued to head more or less north until we found a tree, the only one in the area.

It was growing in a hollow, obviously the remnants of a mining area of a 150 years ago or more. There was shelter here from the wind and an ideal spot for our lunch break.

After lunch we made our way on north across an old stone wall, now well grassed and continued our way towards a plantation, Roughtor plantation by name.



We were soon at the corner and Jack elected to lead us down a signed public footpath, which descended with enclosed land at either side towards Deancombe Valley and the Narrator Brook.

The path down was easy to follow and very difficult to miss, however it was steep and care was needed with some of the large stones in the track.



We followed the footpath down and veered left and crossed the stream via a splendid old clapper bridge.

We picked our way carefully along the side of another stream crossed it and were at the start of a track leading up hill.

We followed the path up through a path to a track running east west.

At this points there were again clear signs directing us down towards Middleworth Farm and eventually about 1.4 away to Norsworthy Bridge Car park.

The track skirts the Arboretum and although wide is quite rough in places.

We soon passed the remains of Middleworth Farm as we made our way down the Deancombe Valley towards the large car park and ice cream van which seems to be there every weekend.



Once we reached the road we turned right walked by the car park and over two bridges, the first over the brook running down from Newleycombe Lake and the second Norsworthy Bridge itself, which is the bridge over the River Meavy.



I imagine this bridge must have been built when the reservoir was constructed, as before that time the River Meavy simply continued its journey down through the now flooded valley and there was no road around the non existent reservoir which needed a bridge.

It is now the location of one of the largest car parks for walkers to use in the Burrator area and one we frequently start walks from.

Just beyond Norsworthy Bridge the road around the reservoir swings west and there is a stile off to the right and a narrow path leading north uphill.

We climbed the stile and followed the footpath which meandered its way steeply uphill for some 300 metres ending with another stile out onto a rough lane just below Dartmoor leat.

We paused to regain our breath after the steep climb and then followed the rough track south west for a short distance until we came upon an old bridge across the leat.

The clapper bridge had been strengthened with large iron plates to enable large logging lorries to drive across it, since the Forestry commission were in the middle of a large treefelling and logging operation in the area.

We crossed this iron sheathed clapper bridge turned left and made our way along the side of the leat now heading west.



We soon rejoined the road and made our way on west along it as it ran beside the leat.

As the road swung south west across the leat and descended we continued along a track and into a grassy area where we enjoyed a short afternoon coffee break.

After that we went over a stile and followed the track through the woods with the leat off to our left.

After a few hundred metres we descended out of the woods via a stile, across the road and back again beside the leat just below it, but without crossing leat.



As the lead headed more south, we walked through the woods again. We veered more to the south west and climbed up through woods, along a barely discernable track.

Off to the right and above us we could see the remains of the raised section of the old Princetown to Plymouth railway line.



50 years ago this was a major and beautifully scenic rail link from Plymouth to the high moors. Unfortunately the Beeching axe put paid to it all those years ago now.

What a magnificent and money making line it would probably be now carry tourists from the centre of Plymouth right up into the heart of the

Dartmoor National Park with wonderful vistas en route.

As we climbed up towards the raised section that once carried the railway line we could see there was an old support bridge with an old rough track under it.

Once we had reached the track and immediately under the bridge we scrambled up the bank at the other side.

Instead of joining the line of the railway and walking along it, as we could have done to make our way back to the start point, we headed up due west through the woods again until we emerged out onto Yennadon Down.

From here it was all downhill across the down back to the Quarry Car park, just under 1.5 km due south of us.



After the tracks up through the woods the going across the short grass of the down made for easy going.



As we left the plantation behind us we enjoyed good views looking down to the reservoir below us.

Soon we were level with the dam and it would only be a short distance before we could see the quarry car park.

We were soon down into the car park where we could see other members of Plymouth Ramblers who, as part of the family group walk had also started from the car park at 11 AM for a leisurely stroll around to also see the bluebells.

The 9 mile estimate was spot on and we had been very lucky with the weather on the day. I had enjoyed the walk and its variation of woodland, fields roads, moorland and most of all the lush carpet of bluebells in Burrator Woods. Thanks Jack for reminding us all just how nice a wood full of bluebells can be.