

THE MOORLAND FRINGES AROUND BURRATOR FROM THE QUARRY CAR PARK START POINT GRID REF: 551679

Once again the sun shone on Jack Sycamore as he led the moorland fringe walk around Burrator on Sunday 14th May 2000. Obviously Jack must have kissed the blarney stone at some point in his long forgotten past as it couldn't possibly be that the sun only shines on the righteous.

The sun certainly brought the ramblers out and although it was a 10AM start we had 39 souls and one dog ready for the off. Jack had reviewed the distance and it was up by only a mile on the advertised length and during the briefing on the route he indicated that the estimated distance was now between 9 and 10 miles.



The map above shows in outline form the route that we took for the walk. To gain a better appreciation of the route, readers advised to relate this route to the Ordnance Survey 1:25000 leisure map 20 of Dartmoor and to the description of the walk which follows. After a little confusion, it was decided that we would be taking a clockwise route around Burrator and the moorland fringes, these digital clocks have something to answer for.



Leaving the car park we climbed up a short but steep path to the moor north of Burrator and commenced our clockwise route around the reservoir.

We went beyond the old dismantled rail line and followed a broad track north for just over a quarter of a mile. As we walked along the broad track we had excellent views of Burrator immediately below us.

Having stopped for a closer look, we soon made our way to a clear entrance to the woodland surrounding large parts of Burrator.

We made our way through the woods and before long we were intersecting the old railway line once again at the point where there was the old rail bridge.



This line once used to link Plymouth to Princetown and what a tourist attraction it would have been today as it rises through some of the most scenic parts of South Dartmoor.



The Beeching axe the rail routes policy of 40 years ago has deprived us of some glorious railroutes.

No chance now of resurrecting the line as sections of it have long since been sold off for private development.

We passed under the bridge and turned left to continue around the reservoir although we couldn't see it as we were in heavily wooded forestry commission land.

Eventually we emerged over a steep stile by the side of the Devonport Leat in a cleared area, an ideal spot for a morning coffee break which we took.

Ten minutes later we were on our way again walking along more open ground and for a while along a small road. There were other people in the area, the network of metalled roads in the area allows easy access in this area of Burrator.



There were good views to our left looking up to Peak Hill and Sharpitor behind with Leather Tor to the right.

Our path ran close to the Devonport leat for a while before we swung more right down an old track and away from the leat.



To our left we could see the now derelict Leather Tor Farm buildings and shortly after we passed a small cave which had been used as a potato cache by local farmers a century ago.

We continued on down the track and we could see the River Meavy on our right through the trees.

We reached a very old bridge over the Meavy, called Leather Tor Bridge, crossed it and swung virtually back on ourselves but on the opposite side of the river.

We followed the clear track down through the woods until we reached Norsworthy Bridge and car park at the most easterly end of Burrator Reservoir.

Across the river at this point there was a good example of the debris trap across the river just below the bridge.



We turned left along the road around the reservoir and walked by the large Norsworthy Bridge car park and followed the road due south for a few hundred yards.



On our left hand side we saw a very unusual stile and Jack, he's the one in the fancy pants, trying to work out how to open this person cage to gain access to the walks through the nature reserve it accesses.

As can be seen from the picture the more conservatively dressed ramblers were only to keen to assist Jack in working out the stile mechanism.

Eventually the puzzle was cracked and we all got through, five or six at a time. We followed the track through the reserve, didn't see any of the wildlife, supposedly there, although we did hear a cuckoo which the leader made efforts to attract closer with the worst imitation of a cuckoo call I have heard in many a year.

Immediately ahead of us was Sheeps Tor but Jack reassured us that it wasn't his intention to climb that Tor on the walk. We exited the reserve via another stile and commenced our climb up through the woods now heading in a south easterly direction.

After a reasonable uphill section, we reached the end of the woods by a stream. We climbed over a stile to leave the woods and stopped for lunch in a sheltered spot. It was certainly warm with very little wind and bright sunshine.



After the lunch break we were on open moorland for about a mile as we headed south across to a copse on the skyline which holds an old scout hut, now rebuilt and used by the military for moorland accommodation during their Dartmoor activities.

Having reached the copse we turned right and followed the track down to the end of a metalled road and a small car park nestling under Gutter Tor a few hundred yards further South.



We turned up towards Gutter Tor and half way up the hill crossed the first part of a stile and turned right to head west along a fenced in area of the moor by the edge of Ringmoor Down.

The fencing continues for approaching two miles.

Some of us wondered why the Ringmoor Down area had been so fenced in as it is unusual up on the moors to see fencing at all, let alone enclosing such a big area of moorland.

After a mile or more of walking alongside the fence we turned right and headed down off the moors to a road which led back to Gutter Tor with another road branching down to Sheepstor.

We headed down the steep descent and could see the village and the church at Sheepstor below us. Before reaching the village we turned left onto a footpath which took us up across fields to some rocks at the top of the fields.



The rocks enclosed a nice area for our afternoon break and we relaxed in the sun for fifteen minutes to enjoy the afternoon sun.



We continued on and over a stile entered the top end of Burrator Wood.

We were met with one of the best bluebell carpets I have seen in many years.

How so many bluebells have come to grow here quite naturally is almost beyond belief. And the aroma, no

words of mine can describe the scent which pervaded the woods at this time of year.

The whole of the woodland floor was a mass of bluebells and their appearance and scent was quite magnificent.

The walk through the woods was over all too soon unfortunately and we continued our descent down the hill to where the footpath has been detoured around the edge of Yeo Farm and its accompanying buildings.

We re-emerged via a sturdy set of wood steps and a stile to emerge onto a narrow farm road at the side of Yeo Farm.



We continued our path down towards the village of Meavy in the valley below. Leaving the farm track and were on the road towards the village and Jack counselled us to watch out for cars.



As we approached the river Meavy we had the choice of the road bridge or the stepping stones across the river. Being ramblers we all naturally chose the stepping stones, in this case for a very easy crossing of the river.

The village was just to our left. we didn't turn down to the village but continued along the road for a few yards

to take the footpath to our right which leads back up the valley north east towards Burrator.

The path was initially through fields and then into a wood as the steepness of the climb increased.

Before reaching the end of the path through the woods, we crossed the Devonport Leat for the final time during this walk. Above Burrator the leat still carries water, below it is dry and SWW pipelines take over.



We were soon striding out for the final hundred yards uphill to the road from Dousland to Burrator and to the quarry car park we had started out from over five hours earlier.

We had a quick count to establish that we had all returned and that all our cars were still in the car park despite sailor Johns predictions across the valley from the car park an hour previously.



Once again it had been a good Sunday walk for the group and thanks to Jack for leading the group so well over the route, particularly when he was so obviously concerned for his daughter in law who had been taken into hospital during the previous night.

We all wish her a speedy diagnosis and recovery.

Another excellent day out for the group and a lovely way to spend a Sunday on the Moors.