

CORNWOOD TO GRIM'S GRAVE, HEN TOR AND RETURN VIA SHELL TOP START POINT GRID REF: 605597

We have been blessed with wonderful winter weather in the westcountry during the middle of February in 2001 and Wednesday 21st February was a magnificent day. The skies were cloudless and there was a light north west wind. With the warm sun it was quite warm and the promise of a good strenuous 11 mile walk led by John Skinner brought out the crowds. We had 22 walkers out from all over Devon plus of course Sophie the Rambler, John and Lesley's dog, who sets a great example to other ramblers. She always keeps up with the pace, she is rarely in front of the leader and is always quiet !!! (apart from the odd growl). If all dogs on walks behaved in the same way as Sophie, they would surely be welcome anywhere.



An outline of the circular route we took up to the moors and back from Cornwood is shown above.

The outline should of course be related to a suitable 1:25000 ordnance survey map of the area such as the outdoor leisure map number 28 of Dartmoor.



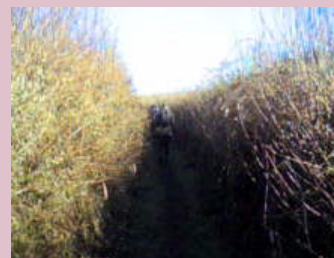
We gathered at the square at Cornwood ready for the off at 10 AM. After John had outlined the route we would be taking we were off heading north east along a road out of the village.

After a couple of hundred yards along the road we turned left and then climbed over a stile into a field to follow the footpath signs across a couple of fields,

climbing all the time.

After the fields we found ourselves heading north along a narrow track with high hedges on either side.

We continued up through this track on to a country lane, turning right and along the lane for a short distance before swinging onto another track which climbed steadily up into Dendles Wood, recently acquired by the Dartmoor National Parks organisation.



The track through the wood continued up alongside a brook, called Broadall Lake Brook.

We turned right and up through a zig zag path through the woods and then on up along a steeply ascending track.

It was decidedly warm as we climbed up through the woods and we were pleased to stop for morning coffee.

We had been climbing uphill, for over 2 miles, ever since leaving Cornwood and we could see the moors high above us and we knew there was plenty more uphill to come yet.

Although it was only February layers of clothing were being removed as we continued our ascent.

Off to the right was the River Yealm and Yealm Steps, a nice waterfall by all accounts. We didn't see it as we climbed steadfastly on and up.

We finally left the wooded area, albeit well cut back near the top and stopped by a gate to remove any warm gear we might be wearing, we were all very hot by this time.



At last we were onto the moor proper and we continued to climb up heading more or less due north.

We were nearing the top now as the ascent lessened.



A brief respite from the uphill as we made our way down and across the River Yealm just below the Yealm Head, at this point the Yealm was no more than a small brook and we made our way across it with little difficulty.

The photo shows Sophie, the very well behaved Miniature Schnauzer lady dog, picking her way carefully across the brook. No whining or barking, just try a few rocks until she found one to take her safely to the other side.

Surely we were at the top by now, but no, close to the top but still not there. We continued to head north and close by some boundary stones we were finally near the local high point.

The moor up here was still quite wet and very tussocky and we headed on north and across and finally down into the valley and Langcombe Brook.

On the other side of the brook we turned left and headed along it to a well known kistvaen, called Grimm's Grave.



This kistvaen is well preserved and we stopped to look down into the hole which once held Mr Grimm.

From there we headed on along the side of the brook to find a spot to stop for lunch at about 12.20 PM. We had been climbing virtually non stop for over 2 hrs and had covered over 4 miles uphill from Cornwood. It was no wonder that it was graded as strenuous.



After lunch we re crossed Langcombe Brook and swung around to the south west for a short section of walking along the contours. At least we weren't going uphill, now it was across very tussocky ground interspersed with marshy areas.

We had brilliant views looking down along the Plym valley and we could pick out the large standing stones along Ditsworthy Warren on the other side of the valley and could see the Plym clearly running through the valley below on its way down to Cadover Bridge.

Our next goal was Hen Tor and this led us to have to negotiate some quite boggy areas.

We climbed up a little to get away from the bogs and made our way across to Hen Tor.



This is a surprisingly large Tor and one that I had not visited before.

We stopped by the tor for a few minutes to admire the views before yet another hard uphill section as we headed up SSE towards the highest point of the walk at Shell Top.



After yet another mile of uphill we were there at the high point of the walk. the local trig point near Shell Top was at just under 500 m.

With Cornwood sitting at 120 m, it follows that we had climbed for just under 400 metres or about 1300 ft,

with barely a downhill section during the whole time. Yes the walk merited the strenuous grading.

We stopped at Shell Top for an afternoon injection of liquid and to look at the scar on the landscape of the Lee Moor Clay works below us to the South West.

It really does cover a wide area of the moor. Shell Top provides an excellent vantage point high above the workings and you can really see just how widespread the clay workings really are in the area.

At least it was to be all downhill from this point for the last 3 miles.



After the break we made our way down along a clear path, with no tussocks, by a bronze age boundary work and then a steep descent down off the moor to a gate called the West Rook Gate.

Through the gate and onto a tarmac track heading down south towards Cornwood.

Although tarmaced it was showing clear signs of water damage after the torrential and persistent rain we have had during the early part of the winter.

It seems incongruous that we should be enjoying such a lovely day, indeed few days, after all the recent bad weather. Will it last ??? After a steep descent, we emerged onto the road leading to Cornwood at Delamore House.

We turned left onto the road and walked single file back to the outskirts of Cornwood and then onto the Cornwood Pub.

By this time I was ready to stop to slake my thirst in that pub but we didn't.



We turned left again and were back into the village again and the village square by the cross where our cars were parked.

It had been an excellent walk, arduous, certainly, but on a bright sunny day it was an excellent circuit up to the moors seeing a variety of Dartmoor terrain at first hand en route.

After thanks being given to John for leading the walk we were off again, some of us back to Plymouth with others off to the far east of Devon.

No doubt there will be a few aching limbs after this 11 mile strenuous walk, but who cares, it was well worth it. Thanks John.

Although we didn't know it at the time this walk in late February 2001 was to be the last walk on Dartmoor for many months as the spectre of Foot & Mouth Disease took hold and it was to be mid June 2001 before we could set foot on Southern Dartmoor once more.