

**A CIRCULAR WALK AROUND THE AREA OF DENBURY HILL FORT TO
WOODLAND EAST OF ASHBURTON
START POINT: UNION INN AT DENBURY GRID REF: 824687**

The 10 mile walk on Wed 29th Nov 00 was researched, reccied and led by George Parkhouse assisted by Malcolm Pope. The day was mild, with some rain, but considering past days, a fairly dry day, overhead we could even catch glimpses of blue sky from time to time.

12 walkers gathered at Denbury a few miles east of Ashburton just outside the Dartmoor National Park area for this walk of fields, paths and lanes.

For some of us, finding Denbury proved a little more difficult than it should have been, however we all managed to get there more or less on time.



An outline of the route which we took on this walk is shown above. To better appreciate the footpaths and lanes and fields the route covered, this outline should be related to a suitable 1:25000 map of the area. Alternatively the Ordnance Survey 1:50000 Landranger 202 map of Torbay and South Dartmoor will prove a suitable alternative.



We gathered by the village green, outside the Union Inn at Denbury and after a briefing on the route from George Parkhouse we were off at just before 10.30 AM.

The village vegetable shop seemed to have gone in for self sufficiency and absolute trust.

The wares were set out on a trestle table by the side of the road with no sign of the shop assistant in site. How

long would such an arrangement last in more built up areas is anyones guess.

In Denbury there is a rather unusually shaped war memorial and we stopped to view it on our way out of the village.

The church at Denbury is also home to a plaque commemorating an event of many centuries previously.

Leaving the village we followed the road west towards Woodland for a short distance. Above us to the south we could see the high ground on which the remains of the Denbury Hill Fort sits.





Soon we were climbing steeply up the track towards the hill fort, now topped with trees, about 2300 years ago, the site of a walled hill fort. As we approached the top, we had great views across to the southern high Tors of Dartmoor and much nearer to us, the sprawling village of Denbury.

We gathered around the plaque on a small memorial stone at the top and then made our way down to the road again, just a couple of hundred yards west of where we left it.

Near the top onto the way down there was an illustrated description of the hill fort including a picture of what historians thought the site looked like all those centuries before.

From the fort we headed down and along a road north east passing Norden Farm and then more west across fields to another narrow road which headed up by a farm and then onto a green lane and down across fields to a road.



We could see the Rising Sun Inn only a couple of hundred years north west of us.

We turned south and took a footpath across fields and some quite rickety stiles, along the side of a field and onto a road.



We turned left and headed down to the village of Woodland and its prominent church.

Just beyond the church, we turned right, along a footpath west through fields to the same road we had ventured onto a few minutes before.

We descended steeply west and then took a footpath southeast for just under a half a mile which brought to a farm called Pitt. A hundred yards past Pitt, we turned right onto another footpath through fields, now south west towards Hatswell and onto a narrow country lane again and downhill west.

At the bottom of the lane we could see that just beyond an old thatched cottage, the road was flooded where a brook flowed straight across the lane.

Although not signed as such it might actually be a ford, or perhaps in a year when we have had the highest rainfall since records began two centuries ago the water level might just have been at record highs too. It looked quite deep, in reality it was only a few inches and we were able to cross it with care without the water going above the top of our boots.



Just beyond the ford we came to a T junction and we turned left and headed south for a short distance until we came to a narrow and very muddy lane heading off to our left.

We turned into this lane, it looked just a little muddy and became very muddy indeed as we progressed south east along it. For the next mile we ploughed through mud, waded through pools, unsure of just how deep these were but I for one had dry feet at the end, the walking boots are waterproof after all!!!

We stopped for lunch just before the turning right to Blackler very near to a huge electricity pylon.



We continued along the lane not turning right and before long emerged onto a real tarmaced road again taking us down through Beaston.

Several cars passed by, a sure indicator that we were approaching a larger spot.

A few hundred yards uphill along the road and we could see another large church ahead of us and we were

entering the village of Broadhempston.

We followed the road as it made its way around the church and into the village proper. It must be a big village since it was home to two pubs and a school.

Apparently the Monks Retreat serves a very good meal as well as having other aces up it's sleeve in serving a range of real ales as well.



Unfortunately the pressures of the day precluded stopping off here for an hour but perhaps another time!!!

We continued through the village, passing several new and newly modernised houses. On our right we passed a very old utilitarian looking now defunct Baptist church.

We continued up the road for a relatively short distance to a T junction where we came across a footpath heading north west towards Torbryan.



A few fields later the footpath came to a narrow road with another footpath directly opposite, continuing along through more fields and down to a stream. Some of the stiles were quite high and rather difficult.

Initially we couldn't see an easy way across the stream but a little further down there were some flat stone slabs reminiscent of a Dartmoor Clapper bridge.

We were soon on our way up alongside another field and down the other side to a gate which led us directly into the small hamlet of Torbryan.

Torbryan may now be just a small hamlet close by the much larger village of Ipplepen but there is plenty of evidence to show it once had a much greater status than it does today.

In the hamlet there is a strangely partly painted old church, a visit inside reveals that it was built in the 14th Century with some of the interior purported to belong to that era.



The painted exterior does nothing to show off the beauty and age of the old church. Naturally enough there are also one or two pubs in the hamlet.



We stopped long enough for a quick look around the church and then we were off again for the final leg of the walk back to Denbury.

Leaving Torbryan we turned left and went through a heavy ornate gate and walked up a footpath along the right hand side of the stream.

After a while we came across a large old house with lots of land attached to it. Someone suggested that it was once the old vicarage, but perhaps not so today.

To the left of the house the stream had been fashioned into a rather fine pond with an ornamental fountain with many varieties of ducks around.



The drive of the house swept up towards the road at the top.

Before we reached the road and the entrance to the drive, we turned right and followed the footpath up through a copse and then across fields north east to emerge on the road again.

We turned right for the final 3/4 mile walk back into Denbury.



To our left and north of us across a couple of fields was the iron age hill fort of Denbury which we had visited getting on for five hours earlier.

We continued on along the road and very soon we were entering the village and the village green and pub was ahead of us.

Although the pub looked inviting after a hard 10 miles through the mud and water, we declined to check whether it was open and removed the layers of muddy gear ready for the trip back home to Plymouth.

Many thanks were given to George for finding this walk in an area most of us had never walked before. It had been a good walk with plenty of interest and not a little history.

It makes a pleasant change to walk in new areas, since most of our walks are either Dartmoor or coastline based.