

FINGLE BRIDGE, DREWSTEIGNTON AND 2 MOORS WAY CIRCULAR WALK

START FINGLE BRIDGE, GRID REF: 743 918

The 12 mile walk from Fingle Bridge on Sunday 3rd Sep 00 was led by Margaret Vatcher who stood in for the original walks leader. I had reccied the walk with Margaret only the Thursday before and acted as back marker for the day, a very unusual position for me, but it is good for the soul. The 3rd Sep was a lovely day, lots of sunshine, very little wind and temperatures into the 20s. Despite the distance from Plymouth, between 30 and 40 miles the walk attracted 19 walkers, luckily all of whom could maintain a good pace, therefore we didn't have any stragglers. As back marker I would have found that a little difficult.

The original walk had been advertised as 10 mile walk with one steep hill, Margaret and I had managed to reduce it by at least 1.5 miles and even so it was still over 12 miles, and as for hills it really was 1 very steep hill out of Fingle Bridge and lots of other quite steep climbs, perhaps strenuous in places would have been a better description.



The outline of the route we took is shown above, and of course this should be related to a full 1:25000 ordnance survey map of Dartmoor such as the outdoor leisure map no 28 map which enables the footpaths we took to be seen easily.



We gathered at Fingle Bridge over the narrow bridge and were more or less ready by 10.30 AM. After a slight delay, after several messages we actually started off at 10.45 AM, rather late for a longer than normal Sunday walk.

We crossed over the Fingle Bridge and just beyond the entrance to the Anglers Rest we turned left and commenced the steepest climb of the day.

We headed up a steep narrow path, gaining height quickly. There were excellent views looking up the Teign Valley and at one point we could just glimpse the edge of Castle Drogo.

After a strenuous climb we intercepted the Hunters Trail for a short distance before we swung north onto the Two Moors Way and headed up towards Drewsteignton. At the top we had a steep descent for a short distance before emerging onto a road at the edge of the village.

We made our way into the main square where amongst other places were the Drew Arms pub and the Drewsteignton Church.



We took the road north from the village which descended for about a half mile and where the road swung east we took the clearly signposted Two Moors Way footpath and over a ford via a small bridge.



There was a rather strange sculpture on the left hand side near Veet Mill Farm, as we started up a slight hill. It was difficult to make out what it represented but some thought it was rather reminiscent of a part of the human body.

The photo doesn't do it justice incidentally. A little further along was another sculpture set into a stone wall.

We continued north and after a further half a mile we walked by Winscombe Farm. There was a concrete track at this point and a few hundred yards on we emerged onto the old A30.

We turned left and walked up and over the flyover carrying us across the new A30 dual carriageway.



Just past the road we turned left and walked down along the signposted 2MW to just beyond a communications mast where the route took us onto open fields for the first time.

We made good progress for the next mile across fields and over stiles.



After crossing numerous fields we descended down into a wood, over a stream and as we left the wood we crossed a ford and along a track still north and onto a road.

This was as far as we went on the 2MW route, it continued north and we turned right and down a road for a short distance. Just before a bridge we turned into a field through a gate and walked through fields along a footpath which ran more or less parallel to the stream.

Once again easy walking but strangely no sign whatsoever of a public footpath, save the stiles we were crossing.



At one point there was a sign saying Beware Bull in Field and needless to say we made even faster progress through that field.

After determining there was no bull in fact in the field we decided to take a lunch break at the eastern edge of the field.

At 1.15 PM we were off again and shortly after we emerged onto a road, and indeed a public footpath sign for the first time.



There had once been a mill by the stream at this point which gave the name to the hamlet, for it was called Hittisleigh Mill.

It marked the most northerly point of the walk. We stopped to admire the beautifully renovated houses and cottages in the hamlet and to gather our breath for the steep hill which was ahead of us.

We crossed the bridge over the stream and headed south east along the road.

The next 1.5 to 2 miles were all on road, luckily a very quiet road. The half a mile or more up to Rydon Farm was all uphill, and quite steep it was too.

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We then had a downhill section and we ignored the road signposted as Drewsteignton, carrying on along the road south easterly.

We had another ascent up Southcombe Hill to where we emerged at a T junction.

We could hear the traffic on the A30 dual carriageway and indeed could see the road two hundred yards south of us.



We turned right and walked parallel to the road for three hundred yards, picking blackberries from the hedgerows.



There was a footpath sign left towards the road and we took it, and walked through a field and through the underpass beneath the main road.

Immediately we left the underpass we turned right and walked alongside but below the main dual carriageway.

We went through a kissing gate and just beyond turned south onto a footpath leading us up and away from the

main road.

The path was a little overgrown in places but we soon found ourselves turning right and shortly after left again as we walked past Lambert. As expected in South Devon the countryside was certainly undulating.

About a half a mile beyond Lambert we entered the village of Crockernwell.

We crossed the road and turned left down a narrow road passing several small cottages, About a fifty yards along the road, just before a building on the left hand side, with stain glassed windows, which could have been a church at one time we turned right and headed south and away from the village.



Following the path we passed Budbrooke and the Lower Budbrooke and then up and then down again to a farm called Narracott.



By the farm we turned more east for a short distance before turning south east once again and entering an old track, now completely enclosed above by the hedgerows which me above us.

We descended down this track until we came to a stream at the bottom which we forded and then swung up and turned through about 180 degrees.

We were now at the most easterly point of the walk, passing the farm buildings and then Coombe Hall to our right.

The route back to Drewsteignton was now almost directly west.

We went uphill through two or three fields before emerging onto a road which headed south east to north west.



There was a narrower road directly ahead of us which we took, still west.

About 100 yards along the road swung to the left and headed due south towards the farm called Preston. It offered a quick route back to Fingle Bridge and three walkers took it, for the steep descent back to Fingle Bridge, circling Prestonbury Hill Fort en route.

This 'shortcut' back to Fingle Bridge is indicated on the map in blue.

The rest of the group took the track west passing Burrow Farm shortly afterwards. There are now some artists who live there and their sculptures were everywhere. They sculpt in a most unusual material, cobb, a mixture of clay and straw.

By the farm there was an old barn made of the material; we were told on the recce that the walls were getting on for 500 years old, unfortunately the roof had collapsed and the cobb walls were gradually disintegrating.



Just past the farm the footpath swung right and led down to a stream and a shaded glade where we had a short break for a liquid intake.



We soon were on our way again up a very steep ascent through fields.

South of us was the Teign Valley and we could see the high point of Prestonbury Castle with the wooded slopes of the Teign Valley below it.

Since there was no footpath in that direction we continued the climb up towards Drewsteignton.

As Drewsteignton drew into view and we walked into the village below the church we knew it was virtually all downhill from here.

Through the village and along the road for a couple of hundred yards and then we saw the 2MW sign to the left.

We turned onto it and followed the signposts which led us down through Rectory Woods and Drewston Wood for an easy descent to the road which led along the final flattish section to Fingle Bridge once again.



It was about 4.15 PM and we had been walking since 10.45 AM.

Most of the group seem keen to return to Plymouth and were soon on their way.

Four sensible beings, including me (the driver) decided that the best way to finish the walk was to slake our thirst in the Anglers Rest where I knew they served some good real ales.

We had an enjoyable 20 mins resting overlooking the river and enjoying the drinks.

What a good way for ending a walk, particularly on such a warm late summers day.



Part of the day of course is the cross moor drive from Mortonhampstead to Postbridge, Two Bridges, Princetown and so back to Plymouth, some 35 miles away.

Overall an excellent day out with a reasonable paced walk with some good energetic uphill sections to test us. It isn't often that the Sunday group does in excess of 12 miles and perhaps if we can offer shorter walks for those that prefer them we could offer both from time to time.