

A WALK FROM HAYTOR VISITING PLENTY OF TORS

START POINT: LOWER HAYTOR CAR PARK GRID REF: 765772

We don't often start walks from Haytor so this walk made a pleasant change. Although it is some 30 miles or more from Plymouth it was well worth the drive.

It was advertised as an 11 mile moderate moorland walk with a few steep climbs. Brenda offered it for us on Wednesday 18th July and we were very lucky with the weather as we were in the middle of a low pressure system and all 20 ramblers who turned up expected windy and wet weather.

Haytor Rocks is located on the south eastern edge of Dartmoor and is only a few miles from Bovey Tracey and Ashburton and with the relative proximity of the A38 only a 33 minute drive from Plymouth.

Although we all expected bad weather, in the event we found it to be a sunny day and virtually no wind to speak of, even up on the highest Tors.



The outline of the route we took is indicated on the map above. It shows that we visited quite a few Tors en route. To be able to follow the route in detail this outline and description should be cross referred to a 1:25000 map of the region such as the OS ordnance survey leisure map no 28 of Dartmoor.

We started the walk from the lower car park, the one below Haytor, this CP has the bonus of a toilet, information centre and very often an ice cream van. Brenda introduced the route and was soon on her way at 10 AM heading at a good pace, aided by Hazel, up the hill to the east of Haytor Rocks heading towards a disused quarry about 500 yrds north west of the start point.

This was to be the first of many ascents during the day and compared with some of them this first uphill section was very easy going.

The quarry itself, long disused was very pretty with two pools in it both with water lilies on the surface.



It looked and felt very tranquil indeed and it proved to be the first of many lovely views during the walk.



Leaving Haytor Quarries we continued on north westerly along level and well cropped grassland to Smallacombe Rocks, an outcrop of rocks affording some good views.

The photograph shows some of the group out gathering in front of these rocks and stopping to admire the views unfolding in front of them.

From the rocks we turned north east and headed across to the Hole Rock area where there is a logan stone, very large but delicately balanced so that it moves when people stand on it.

Brenda can be seen in the picture, standing on the rock, queen of all she surveys.

Once again there were brilliant views looking across valleys to the Tors, the village of Manaton and even down to Houndtor woods along the Bovey valley.



Continuing north east, we soon arrived at a local high point at Black Hill at 412 m where there is a semi flattened cairn. Our first climb was over and we commenced our steep descent on a bearing of 020 degrees down to near a road which runs down to the Becky Falls area where there is a superb waterfall of water cascading over the rocks.

We were not heading there on this walk. Instead we turned left and headed west along a well defined footpath.



We descended down heading SW to near Leighon and then uphill before we swung north west and headed down through a wood to an old clapper bridge over Becka Brook.

We were now at the bottom of a valley and the first of the advertised steep ascents lay ahead, 350 feet of uphill on a bearing of 280 degrees before we emerged just below Greater Rocks.

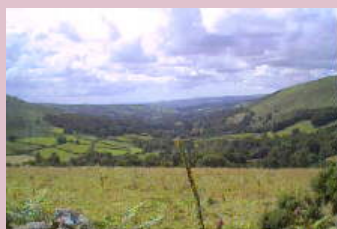
We stopped at the top to recover our breath and to have morning coffee, below us in the valley we could see the remains of the medieval village of Hundatonam which I believe was mentioned in the Domesday Book.

After coffee we headed down across the valley to the west of the village before another short steep ascent up to the majestic Hound Tor, visible from many miles away.



We stopped briefly to admire Hound Tor and then descended north west to Swallerton Gate CP, used by many people as the car park to use for the walk up to Hound Tor. By the houses at Swallerton Gate we turned due north and headed along a narrow but relatively level track towards a gate onto the open moors where there were good views of Bowermans Nose rock on Haynes Down in the distance.

At this point we turned left and headed due west up a track and then down the other side of a hill towards Jays Grave. This well known grave always seems to have fresh flowers on it and money on the headstone to make sure that Betty Jay will always have some money and will never be a pauper again.



There is an interesting story behind this grave, but that's another story.....

From Jays Grave we continued along a clearly defined Bridlepath heading west and from time to time we had great views of Hamel Down, high above us and down the valley towards Widecombe in the Moor, one of the best known of all the Dartmoor villages because of

Widecombe Fayre and the related folk song.

After three quarters of a mile of walk along the rutted bridleway we emerged out onto a small lane. We turned south and walked down this narrow lane, downhill all the way for well over a mile. This was the only real section of road walking during this walk and it was quiet enough with very few vehicles to bother us. Downhill all the way and if we had continued on this road we would have ended up at Widecombe in the Moor.

As we descended high above us on our left loomed Honeybag Tor, surely we weren'tyes we were.... Brenda smiled as she explained that we had a short uphill section to the top of the Tor where we would be taking lunch.

We certainly earned lunch as the uphill section was a very steep narrow path heading straight up towards to



the top, a quick 500 ft of very hard going. After a lung bursting ascent we emerged at the top where we were rewarded with magnificent views yet again. This walk certainly assailed the senses in many ways, the views were simply superb.



Sunshine and no wind greeted us and it was a pleasure to sit at the top, enjoy our lunch and pick out all the Tors and other landmarks we could see all round us.

After lunch we were advised that most of the hard climbs were over, well almost.....

We headed off due south down a slope and then up again to Chinkwell Tor and more good views.

From there onwards and down hill on a bearing of 160 degrees passing Bell Tor over an open narrow unfenced road over Bonehill Down to the south side of Bonehill Rocks.

The tracks were clear in this area and the walking relatively easy heading SSE crossing a car park and the B3387. About a mile from Bonehill Rocks is Top Tor and we headed straight for it and up to the local high point.



At Top Tor the clouds were gathering and we envisaged we might get wet after all.

We decided to give Rippon Tor a miss on this walk and headed on a bearing of 120 degrees down to the road by Hemsworthy Gate, along the side of the road to another car park then swung more north up a 100 ft ascent to Saddle Tor.

It began to rain as we approached Saddle Tor so we sheltered here for a quick afternoon tea stop. Luckily the rain didn't last long and wet weather gear was removed as the warmth returned.

A half a mile north east lay the imposing rocks of Haytor Rocks, one of the most imposing Tors in the whole of the National Park.

We descended from Saddle Tor and then had the final ascent of about 150 feet up to the huge granite outcrops of Haytor Rocks. Those who wished to finish with a flourish decided to climb to the top of the outcrops, whilst others were content to sit and rest and enjoy the views right across to the sea and the River Teign estuary, many miles away.



Having enjoyed the views we descended some 400 feet back to our start point and the ice creams van to conclude a brilliant 11 mile walk in excellent weather.

Brenda deserved all the congratulations she received for putting on such a nice walk, there was so much variety in it that one member remarked that it was the best walk he had ever done on Dartmoor in the year since he moved down from Lancashire.

Out of interest he also worked out our total ascent during the day, statisticians may be interested to hear that we had climbed some 1700 ft during the day, it also follows that we descended 1700 ft as well so it would be true to say that the day had had its ups and downs.

Thanks Brenda for putting on such a lovely walk and for leading us so well during the day.