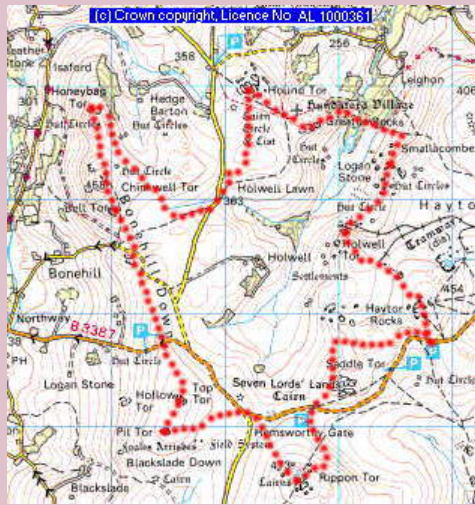


10 TORS FROM HAYTOR CAR PARK ST POINT: HAYTOR UPPER CP GRID REF: 759767

A popular goal of walks up on Dartmoor is to visit a number of Tors. There is a good 10 mile circular walk, in the right conditions, starting at Haytor Car Park that will take us up to 10 different Tors including some of the best known and spectacular Tors on Dartmoor, Haytor and Hound Tor.

This walk was led by Dave Pawley on 17th March 02 and he had graded it as moderate to strenuous and in the prevailing weather conditions this is certainly proved to be for the 15 walkers who arrived to embark on the walk with a forecast of strong winds and heavy rain.

As usual when the forecast is bad it normally turns out to be true.



The route taken for the walk is shown above and this outline should of course be studied in conjunction with a 1:25000 map of Dartmoor such as the O.S. outdoor leisure map no 28.

The group set off at 10.30 on the walk in overcast conditions.



We crossed the road and headed across west from the car park towards the first of the Tors, Saddle Tor about a half a mile from the car park. Swing more south west as the road turns in that direction.

The approach to Saddle Tor is not difficult with clearly defined paths. Naturally the terrain near the Tor is steepish uphill but it is only a short

climb.

From the Tor follow the track downhill towards the car park below Saddle Tor on about 210 degrees, cross the road and head up a steepish climb towards Rippon Tor passing through a gate in a dry stone wall.

This is the first of the steep climbs of the day, not the steepest I add but enough to get the blood coursing through the veins.

It is a slight zig zag approach to the Tor since once through the gate you turn onto about 280 degrees as the narrow path takes you up to the top. At the summit of Rippon Tor there is plenty of evidence of cairns to occupy the eye and the views from the top are spectacular in all directions.



Leave Rippon Tor and head down towards a road junction and cattle grid below on a bearing of 310 degrees. Cross the road and head up towards the left of two Tors on the skyline.

It is best not to go in a direct line since the ground to the left is decidedly marshy.



Walk in a curve keeping above the marsh and make your way up, passing en route an iron age settlement and associated field system reworked in the middle ages and known now as Foale's Arrishes. As you reach the top you will see Pil Tor ahead of you. Continue to the far side of the Tor for the first glimpses of Widdicombe in the Moor in the valley way below you.

The general view on this section of the moor are brilliant showing the deep valleys with the farms and the high moorland above, on a clear day you can see for miles.

We stopped at Pil Tor for morning coffee, still dry, were we going to be lucky with the weather.

Leaving Pil Tor we headed along a flattish section towards Top Tor, only a few hundred yards away and on a bearing of 030 degrees.

The views continued to be good from Top Tor and then we headed down towards Bonehill Rocks way below us on a bearing of 340 degrees.

Unfortunately as we left Top Tor we could see the weather closing in on the other side of the valley and within minutes we were in heavy rain; this was to continue on and off for the rest of the day.



About half way down towards the Rocks we crossed the road leading steeply downhill towards Widdicombe.



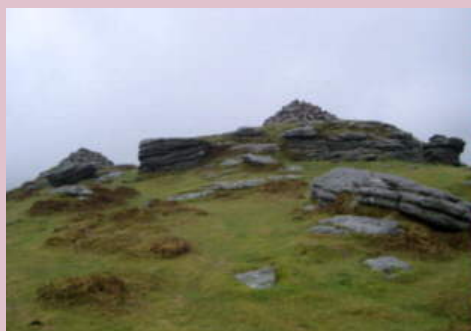
Continuing on, we passed near Bonehill Rocks, a big outcrop but not carrying the magic name of a Tor. Across the road we could see a steep uphill

section for us to tackle and off to the left a roundish outcrop shown on the map as Bell Tor.

By contouring round to the right from the Rocks we reached Bell Tor across relatively level terrain, albeit with a climb near the end.

The wind was rising here too but was behind us so we didn't realise its increasing strength.

The steepness of the climb increased as we made our way on up the hill towards the Tor at the top. This Tor, called Chinkwell Tor was number six on the list.



Chinkwell Tor was at a local high point and from this Tor on a bearing of 350 degrees we went down and up again towards a widely scattered outcrop of rocks called Honeybag Tor (no 7), my planned lunchstop for the day.

Sheltering from the wind here proved quite difficult, as we began to realise just how strong the wind was becoming. The fog hadn't arrived though, yet !!

Our noted letterboxer managed to lose his rucksack cover at this point in the wind, it was retrieved some distance away by another pair of walkers however so it wasn't lost forever.



The ground to the west of Honeybag Tor drops very steeply away and off to the east, about a mile away across a valley we could see Hound Tor, a very popular Tor to visit served with its own large car park at Swallerton Gate.

Although by a direct route the Tor was close it was a full two miles or more of walking to get there. Between

Honeybag Tor and Hound Tor the valley had enclosed farming land with no right of way through it.

Leaving Honeybag Tor, we made our way down east to near a dry stone wall and then headed off along the side of the dry stone wall on a bearing of approx 150 degrees.

As the dry stone wall swings east it is tempting to follow it. Put that temptation to one side as it will lead you directly into a bog. Continue on about 160 degrees until you meet a track heading back round the top of the bog on about 070 degrees.

Follow this track as it swings round the far side of the bog for about half a mile and it will lead you out to a road and another cattle grid.

Follow the road along for a hundred yards north until you reach a signed footpath off to the right towards Holwell Lawn.

Go over a stile, turn immediately left and then walk along a track taking you uphill parallel to the road.

When you reach a dry stone wall, go through a gate, onto the road and immediately beyond the dry stone wall turn right again and then follow a track north and up to the impressive Hound Tor about a half a mile further on.



Hound Tor, our eighth Tor visited, is a very big Tor and if you have the time it is well worth exploring it.

From Hound Tor looking south east across a valley about a half mile away is another large outcrop called Greater Rocks.

We contoured down and round to Greater Rocks, noticing the medieval village just below us to our left, until we reached Greater rocks, Tor no 9. Beyond Greater Rocks is another steep sided valley with Becka Brook running through it.



Just north of Greater Rocks there is a dry stone wall with a gate and a signpost directing you down a steep descent to the base of the valley and a clapper bridge over the Becka Brook.

Make your way through the gate and down the steep descending path, take care though as it can be quite slippery in places until you reach the old clapper bridge

at the bottom.

The clapper bridge will get you across the brook in all but the wettest conditions when the brook has been known to flood above the level of the bridge.

On the other side follow a difficult rock strewn path up through a wood, climbing towards the open moor above the wood. As you emerge out of the woods look up and high above you lies Smallacombe Rocks off to the right and clearly visible if you crane your neck and look up towards the skyline.

The track leading up this steep sided valley can clearly be seen, it looks steep, but fear not, it is just as steep as it looks. The fit ones can run up, the not so fit can stop frequently to admire the scenery. I fall into the latter category and it was quite a strain climbing up to the rocks high above.

The height gain from the clapper bridge to the rocks is only about 350 ft but it felt rather more because of the steepness.

Eventually though Smallacombe rocks was reached and the fog was thick on the day we walked it.

From these rocks at the top then Holwell Tor and quarries can clearly be seen (sometimes) just over a half a mile away on a bearing of 205 degrees. On the day of the walk it was on compass bearings from the rocks all the way back to the start point, a pity because once again the views are magnificent.

As we approached Holwell Tor we came on an old tramway track with stone 'rails' which led down to the quarries under the Tor. Before reaching the quarries we swung off to the left for the steep ascent, yes another one, but not so long as the previous one, this took us up to the top of Holwell Tor, this according to my count was Tor no 10. We had one more Tor to go after this, OK so call it the 11 Tors walk!!!

Almost back now, about a mile to go, we headed up the hill on a bearing of 135 degrees until we reached another quarry, in this case a large hole in the ground. We made our way round the right hand side of the quarry to the top of it and we came on a clear track on the same bearing as before.

From the higher point overlooking the quarry there is a steep drop down to the quarry floor, it is unfenced so take care on a foggy day.

This, our last climb of the day, took us up to the biggest Tor of all those we had visited, Haytor Rocks, another very very popular tourist site on a nice day.



On the day of our walk we didn't see any of the rocks until we were within about 20 yards of them, yes the fog had really clamped down in the wind and incessant rain.

No point in exploring these rocks today, it would have been foolhardy but on a nice day this local beauty spot attracts many many visitors. It was all downhill from here, normally the car park on a quarter of a mile below us would be clearly visible, but not so on this occasion. We followed a bearing of 163 degrees and soon found the wide grassy track leading down to the car park.

There were a lot more cars in the car park than when we had left the spot some five hours earlier, there was even an ice cream van, not exactly doing a roaring trade in this weather.

I breathed a sigh of relief that I had led the 10 mile walk without any injuries and all 15 had arrived back more or less in one piece and all had one thing in common, they were very, very wet.

Yes there were lots of 'I enjoyed the walk' comments from the ramblers, we are such a polite lot.

It would have been a great walk in the right conditions but quite frankly today the conditions had deteriorated early on and the views were in the main spoilt. Never mind it may be better the next time I lead a group around the route.

All that was left was the 25 mile drive back in the relative warmth of the car to Plymouth and a good soak to warm us up again.

Another walk over, stats: 11 Tors, five good climbs, two very hard, the others taxing, about 5 to 6 hrs depending on breaks and viewing stops and a full 10 mile walk. The grading of moderate to strenuous was justified.