

## HORRABRIDGE, WHITCHURCH COMMON AND SAMFORD SPINEY START POINT GRID REF: 513 699

The walk from Horrbridge was led by Malcolm Pope on Wednesday 23rd Feb 2000. The forecast was for a mild but muggy and foggy day and so it turned out to be.

At 12 degrees C, even up on the moors, it certainly wasn't the day for many layers of clothes but the waterproofs certainly came to their own, particularly up on the Whitchurch Down area east of Tavistock.



An outline of the route of 8 to 9 miles is given above and as usual this should be related to the 1:25000 OS map of Devon which will clearly show the footpaths taken.

We set off from the Leaping Salmon pub in Horrbridge at just turned 10 AM and made our way up through the car park to the rear of the pub to a track leading to a footpath heading north through fields.

We followed the path up through the fields on the outskirts of Horrbridge and before long we were passing to the rear of Grimstone Manor, now used mainly for residential training courses.

A few hundred yards further we were walking through fields and we came upon a small perfectly symmetrical stone circle. I hadn't realised that the stone circles had been built this far down off the moors but obviously they had.



The steepish climb out of Horrbridge was to be the only uphill section of any significance that we were to meet during the day.



We turned more north west and skirted around what appeared to be a small reservoir. There was a seat by the edge and it could even have been a small outdoor swimming pool in the middle of a small copse.

Initially we could see no sign of any buildings, but plenty of evidence of mine workings in the area.

A few yards further on however we came upon a large house. This house had been the mine captains residence a hundred years ago and it had obviously been carefully restored over the years to the excellent condition it appears to be in today.



As we skirted the house and the mine workings in the area there was plenty of discarded machinery left lying around, some of it in remarkably good condition.



Perhaps much of the machinery had been discarded when the mines ceased working some 50 years ago.

Much of it was lifting gear, pulley systems and other related items.

It never ceases to amaze me that machinery such as this seems to have no residual value and it simply just left to rot. Surely industrial archaeological museums and even enthusiasts would snap them up.

We continued to head north west following a well defined track passing more mine workings and a small copse absolutely full of snowdrops. I cannot recall seeing quite so many in one spot before.

Just after the snowdrops we came upon yet more machinery including a very well preserved crusher, perhaps used to crush ore, mind you it may have been for crushing grain, but whatever it was it was in relatively good condition.



We left the woodland and continued across more fields and over plenty of stiles since every field had stiles for access to and departure from the field.

Geoff, one of the walkers, was keeping a rough tally of the stiles climbed and the numbers crossed increased rapidly as we progressed up to the higher downs on the edge of the moor.

With all the fields and undulating land, there were a few streams to cross but there were usually some small bridges to enable us to make it over the deeper streams so we were able to continue to make steady progress.

We continued to walk through fields before a short stop for morning coffee under the trees. After coffee we still continued to head north west for about a further mile before swinging right to north east for a few hundred yards before emerging on the edge of a small hamlet called Middlemore.



We followed the path up through the small village and turned left onto a small road passing plenty of large houses en route.



One of the houses on our right caught our eye since at the bottom of the large lawn was a very old arch. I wonder what had been there a hundred years ago.

Leaving the village we continued to climb slowly heading north following narrow lanes towards Whitchurch Down on the eastern edge of Tavistock. Just before reaching the down we stopped by an old pond for lunch at 12.15. The fog was beginning to fill in quite nicely and visibility was

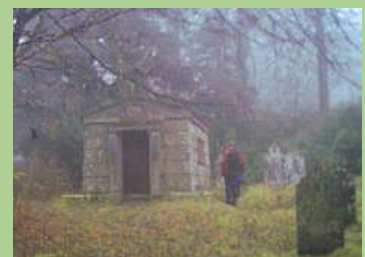
down to under a couple of hundred yards, not bad for Dartmoor.

With the fog around us it was getting rather damp but with the wet weather gear on, no problems.

A couple of hundred yards on and we were on the edge of Whitchurch Down by Tavistock Golf course and we followed the road heading east.

We followed the road keeping to the edge on the grassy banks and on the tracks running parallel to the road. Soon we were passing another hamlet called Casey Town. It was about 2 miles from the Down to our next village, that of Sampford Spiney.

Unfortunately the poor visibility in the mist spoilt our views and following a road downhill we suddenly emerged at Sampford Spiney Church. We had a quick look around the outside of the church and the graveyard in which there was a small mausoleum, which caught our eye.



We stopped by the church for afternoon tea before moving off again for the final couple of miles across fields and more stiles back towards Horrabridge, 2 miles south west of us along clearly marked footpaths



The walking was quite easy with small tracks and footpaths through fields and over streams.

We passed by a house with a china cow in the corner of the garden and Malcolm told us that this was one of David Baileys' country homes. David Bailey was a well known photographer in the seventies in London incidentally.

More sliding and slithering in the mud in the fields, passing by stables and farms and there below us in the valley below, we could see Horrabridge.

As we descended we had left the mist, or was it cloud we had been in at the higher altitude. We passed the entrance to Grimstone Manor and followed the track down again to the Leaping Salmon and our cars once again.

Geoff who had been counting the stiles claimed that we had crossed 29 stiles during the day. I knew we had passed over quite a few, but 29, I think that must be a record for a walk.



With only 13 of us the stiles hadn't held us up significantly; it might have been quite a different story however had we done this walk on a Sunday with 30 or more walkers. We were back by the cars by 2.45, about four hours of relatively easy walking, despite the stiles.

We thanked Malcom for putting the walk on and we were soon on our way back to Plymouth. It was a pity about the visibility though, as I can imagine the views would have been very good on a clear day.