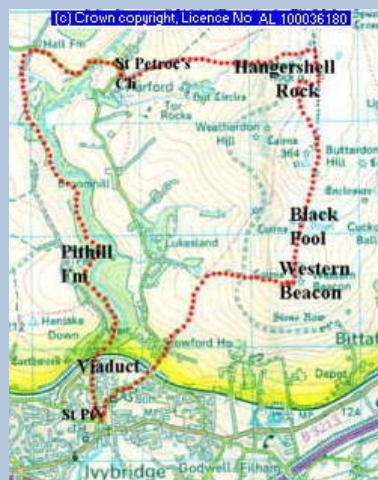


IVYBRIDGE TO HANGERSHELL ROCKS AND RETURN VIA WESTERN BEACON

START POINT GRID REF: 635 565

Ivybridge is a fast growing town and it's proximity to Dartmoor means that there must be several walks that could be started from there. The walk led by George Parkhouse was however the first one that I had started from Ivybridge and so the terrain leaving the town was completely unknown to me. It was a warm sunny day on Wednesday 19th July and just under 20 ramblers made it to the start point adjacent to the Paper Mill by the River Erme just above Ivybridge itself.

The walk of just over 8 miles was graded as moderate with one steep climb to test the lungs.



An outline of the route taken is shown above. It as always should be related to the 1:25000 ordnance survey map of the area (OS Leisure No 28 of Dartmoor) to gain a better appreciation of the footpaths, tracks and roads walked than can be seen from the outline above.



The walk started at 10.15 AM with a briefing from George as to the route and then we were off, leaving the western entrance to the paper mill and entering the woodland walk area to the left of the river Erme by the entrance near the sign graphic showing the woodland and riverside walks available locally.

We were soon walking through trees with the Erme tumbling and cascading down over the rocks and boulders on its way to the sea. In the woodland setting it certainly is very attractive. With the proximity to Ivybridge and its growing population however it was inevitable that the actual footpath would show strong signs of erosion and plenty of long tree roots had become exposed.

We trod carefully as we got used to the unevenness of the path but good progress was made as we climbed slowly up and away from the town through the woods.



Soon we crossed under the viaduct carrying the main rail line to Plymouth and beyond into Cornwall and to the end of the line at Penzance.



The Erme still had a fair amount of water in it as it flowed down over the boulders and in places the footpath was muddy as well as slightly difficult with the exposed roots of trees.

Unfortunately, early in the walk one of the lady walkers slipped and damaged her wrist on the footpath in the vicinity of Pithill Farm. After a period of recovery she was able to return to Ivybridge accompanied by her husband.

We hope that her injury heals quickly and that she is back walking soon.

After that setback we trod even more carefully and although the woodland views were excellent we were quite pleased when we left the wooded area just beyond Hanger Down.



We came to a road, turned right and followed it along until we reached Harford Bridge. Another of the Dartmoor bridges I had never seen before, with the many rivers flowing down off Dartmoor there will be many more to see I am sure.

Having crossed over the narrow old bridge we followed the road as it climbed up to the village of Hartford.



As we approached the village we could see an old church, St Petroc's Church and we stopped at this point just outside the church for a break, to walk around this very old church and to have a drink prior to the steep uphill section onto the moorland above.

Soon we were on our way once again with steep climb up a narrow road eastwards up to a car park leading on to the moor.

High above us to the east we could see the moor and some rocks and we continued our climb up across the open moorland. At one point we had to take care with a potentially marshy area with a small brook flowing down to a wooded area below and a small reservoir.

We continued up towards the rocks known as Hangershell Rock.

Instead of walking directly to it however we veered to the left and followed a track around to the north of the rocks until we reached a stone row.



At this point we swung south and walked up an easy path until we were level with the back of the rock when we turned and made our way to it for our lunch break.

At 350 metres or over 1000 ft there are great views around the local area and we enjoyed the vista as we rested and ate our food.



Following lunch, we headed off south along relatively level ground towards Butterdon Hill and its accompanying trig point.

This point is fractionally higher than Hangershell Rock at 364 metres and there are good views to the east to Ugborough Beacon and to the south to Western

Beacon.

We continued our way south, the path clearly marked with a series of standing stones to guide us along our path.

With the stone row earlier and the clear set of standing stone markers it is an obvious route of some historical significance.



After the difficulties of the earlier eroded footpath up alongside the Erme through the woods this moorland walking was much easier.



We approached an indentation on the ground ahead of us which must have been quite a substantial pool at some time. In the summer, although damp, there isn't much water to be seen but in the winter I'm advised it is quite a different pool to look at.

On the map it is shown as Black Pool so this is the Dartmoor variant of the Blackpool in Lancashire, quite a different sort of place!!

To show how different it can look, I have been sent this photo of the Black Pool taken in early November.

For those who may not know, October 2000 was one of the wettest Octobers in many years and Black Pool was showing distinct signs of looking like a real pool at last.



It would appear from the photo that it was taken on a day with blue skies and sun, there haven't been many of those recently.



Passing by Black Pool we started an easy ascent again up towards Western Beacon.

From our direction of approach it looked like yet another Dartmoor Cairn burial chamber, nothing spectacular in that but upon our arrival the spectacle changed completely.

The beacon is the high ground at one of the southern most points of the moor and the ground dropped away steeply below us down towards Ivybridge and the South Hams.

The panorama needed to be studied carefully to realise just what we could see from this point. Although a cloudless sky there was some haze which limited our visibility.



Even with the haze, we could see the Erme Estuary and the sea ahead, right across Bigbury Bay to Bolt Tail and to the west right across to Plymouth, the Sound and to Cornwall beyond. I'm told that 7 major rivers are visible from this point and I really found the views quite inspiring.

After 15 minutes of simply admiring what we could see laid out before us, we were up and off again for the final descent off the moor.



We headed off down from Western Beacon at 335 metres and descended south west until we intercepted a well known trail, the Two Moors Way. This route is signed using the MW marker symbol one above the other and links Dartmoor to Exmoor and is one of the famous moorland routes.

As we left the moor via a gate carrying the Moors Way symbol we were on an easy descending track for the final section back towards Ivybridge once again.

Ivybridge has really spread out seemingly in all directions and before long we were on the outskirts of the town once again.

We passed by the modern buildings of Ivybridge Community College on our left hand side and just further on to our right the old buildings of the PaperMill, quite a contrast the new school and the old Mill buildings of about 150 years ago.



Just below us flowed the River Erme and since we had parked on both sides of the Erme below the Paper Mill the walk was at an end for some but for others, down over a bridge and up the other side to their cars just by the entrance to the woodland walk.

It had been a pleasant walk up to the moors from Ivybridge and I have now visited the Hill so clearly visible from the A38 as it passes Ivybridge. I could only marvel at

the views from that point and I must visit it again soon to spend more time soaking up the views from there.

Thanks to George for giving me yet another Dartmoor experience to savour. The views were wonderful, particularly from Western Beacon.