

IVYBRIDGE TO THREE BARROW AND RETURN VIA UGBOROUGH BEACON

START POINT IVYBRIDGE MAIN CAR PARK GRID REF: 635561

Ivybridge is one of the fastest growing towns in Europe with many moving here from Plymouth. It is located about 10 miles east of Plymouth and nestles between the A38 and the moors to the north.

Hazel Smith who lives in the town had offered a 14 mile brisk paced walk up to the high moors from the town main car park on Wednesday 29th August 01. It attracted 23 walkers on a lovely sunny warm late summers day. Most had walked with Hazel before and knew there would be no hanging round on this walk.

For this walk we were joined by Jen of the Cardiff Group who was visiting the region. We hope she enjoyed the experience and that she will soon be once again be able to walk up on the Brecon Beacons, an area still barred to walkers following recent F&M outbreaks.



The map of the route is shown above. It must be related to a 1:25000 map of Dartmoor such as the OS leisure map no 29 of Dartmoor in order to really see where we walked.



After an excellent briefing on the main points we would be visiting we were off at just gone 10 AM leaving the main car park and making our way across the bridge over the Erme from which the town gets its name Ivybridge.

There was very little water in the Erme after a dry sunny summer spell, it looks very different after a period of heavy rain however.

Crossing the bridge we turned right and made our way up and out of the town with the River Erme on our right. Soon we had passed a large paper making factory on the other side of the river and entered a wood with riverside walks.

We continued up with the river on our right and we passed under a high viaduct which carries the main railway line from Paddington to Plymouth and further west.

A relatively short distance beyond the viaduct there was a footpath off the the left, back on itself which led us up and out of the woods and onto Henlake Down.

We headed north west across the down and then swung north and up onto the wide open access land of Hanger down.

We had climbed getting on for 500 ft out of Ivybridge and there was plenty more uphill to come before we reached the moors.

As we got onto the southern fringes of Hanger Down we headed up north west and the north again.

Ahead of us and off to our left we could see a circular copse shown on the map as Hanger Down Clump.

This 'clump' of trees is a good landmark and can be seen from a long distance.

We continued north and veered onto a bearing of 030 degree towards Blackland Corner where we stopped for morning coffee in the sun.



After a short break we were on our way again off along a narrow leafy lane, dry underfoot today but at other times a complete mud bath.

Hazel and Brenda can be seen striding out, leading from the front as usual.

The view of them in the picture was one that I had for most of the day, when I was close enough behind them .One short pause and a gap soon opened up!!

After a few hundred yards we came onto a narrow country land which headed generally east towards the hamlet of Harford.

We turned right onto the lane and headed off east towards Harford. After a few hundred yards we crossed Harford Bridge, seen in the photo on the right.



Over the bridge and a short but sharp climb uphill towards Harford and its very ancient church.



We walked through the cemetery in front of the old church and paused to hear Hazel tell us a little of the history of the church, many many hundreds of years old.

There is a very old cross by the entrance gate to the church and then we swung left and started a serious uphill climb

north east along a country lane which led us up to the moors above. After just under a half mile of hard climbing uphill we emerged through a gate to a car park at Harford Moor Gate.

From Harford Bridge up to the Moor Gate we had climbed a further 400 ft.

More uphill to come, but of course.

Having paused to gather the 23 walkers together we were off heading north first by the side of a dry stone wall and then on still north across open moor with splendid views ahead of us up a steep sided valley through which the Erme flowed down and off to the immediate left to Tristia Rock.



We continued along the same bearing for a few hundred yards until we came upon an excellent example of a kistvaen. We stopped to admire the kistvaen, one member decided to try it for size, it seemed to fit her well. There were no wasps in it luckily!!

About a mile away at the top of the Eastern side of the valley we could see our next target point Sharp Tor, at 420 metres it was another 500 ft higher than Harford Moor Gate, yes we were still gaining ground.



The views up and across the valley more than made up for the effort of climbing up to Sharp Tor and cairn just beyond it.

We had been climbing most of the time since we had left Ivybridge, almost there but not quite. Looking off to the NNE we could see our high point beckoning us for lunch.

Just over a half a mile away on the skyline we could see Three Barrows, so called because that is exactly what it consists of, three old burial mounds.

Fifteen minutes later we were there at just before 1PM.

This was the highest point of the walk. With one relatively short break we had been walking mainly uphill for getting on for three hours at a good pace too.



Three Barrows is at an elevation of 464 metres, Ivybridge car park at 60 metres, so a 400 metre or 1300 ft climb in total to work up our appetite for lunch.

After a 25 minute lunch break and resting we were off again.



Down again to cross the Ivybridge Redlake railway track used up to the mid 30s to carry china clay down to Ivybridge and the main railway line.

Just beyond the old track we could see a line of boundary posts.

Many of them carried H on one side and U on the other. These boundary stones marked the parish boundaries of Ugborough and Harford.

For the next two miles route following was easy, we simply followed the line of boundary stones, descending in the main but with the usual moorland undulations.

The stones continued to guide us along on a bearing of about 160 degrees and progress was very fast, as might be expected with the downhill after the efforts of the morning.

We passed single stones, and at one point a pair of them.

Hazel pointed out that from a distance the pair of stones shown in the picture could be easily mistaken for a parent and child standing on the skyline, perhaps so, perhaps not, we soon passed the pair.



A couple of hundred yards downhill from the stone pair we came upon a stone carrying a prominent cross.

On the map this very old stone with engraved cross is marked as Habajons Cross and it is there to ward off the evil spirits of the Devil, which obviously lies in waiting on the moor for the unsuspecting walker !!

A little over a half mile further on with Hangershell Rocks off to the west we came upon another cairn.

This Hazel used as her turning point and we turned due east and made our way across and up to Ugborough Beacon on a bearing of about 100 degrees and under a mile from the cairn.

Yes it was uphill again but it only served to lead us to splendid views off to the East where the ground fell dramatically away to the town of South Brent and the A38 express way hundreds of feet below.



We stopped here for our afternoon break and then again we were on our way once again.

The next aiming point was Western Beacon which overlooks Ivybridge but did we go there by contouring. Bet your life we didn't.



Hazel led us down south west to cross a stream and then up the other side for yet another climb to visit another very old burial chamber.

John Smith our resident Dartmoor historical archaeologist reminded us that many kistvaens were bronze age, this one was Neolithic and therefore was over 4000 yrs old.

There are only two or three such examples of the neolithic period on the whole of Dartmoor so it was well worth a visit.

Getting on for another 150 ft climb and we were at Western Beacon with magnificent views on a clear day.



With the heat haze of the day the views were rather restricted but the panorama of the expanding town of the Ivybridge was spread out mozaic fashion below us.

All we had to do was to descend the 800 ft back again to the car park a couple of miles below us.

From Western Beacon we headed down west towards a gate through which we exited the moor. We had picked up the 2 Moors Way for the final downhill section and the gate bore the 2MW emblem to remind us of this well known route linking Ivybridge to Dartmoor and Exmoor beyond, a 110 mile route for those that enjoy long distance walking.



We descended steeply down a rough track and then out onto country lanes again down to Stowford Bridge

over the main railway line once again.

All that now remained was to make our way down through the roads of Ivybridge with this time the Erme on our right hand side.

By about 4 PM we re-entered the town car park just over six hours after leaving it.

The sun had shone more or less all day and the moor was very dry. The sun had shone on Hazel and those walking with her all day, muddy areas were dry and we had been led from the front at a keen pace for the whole walk.

We all thanked Hazel for her efforts on the day and those who were able to do so rounded off the walk with a visit to Hazel's house in Ivybridge for tea and refreshments.

Another good walk for the ramblers and the liaison between Plymouth and Moorland group ramblers for our Wednesday walks continues to thrive. Long may it continue to do so.