

IVYBRIDGE, HARFORD, TRISTIS ROCK AND NEW WASTE (9.5 MILES) START POINT IVYBRIDGE VIADUCT GRID REF: 635569

Ivybridge is relatively close to Plymouth and on 2nd Feb 03 Fran Allen offered an interesting walk encompassing woodland, riverside, a visit to a rarely visited spot, Tristis Rock on Burford Down and a return across Hanger Down, a walk of just over 9 miles.

Parking is on the road and the walk start time was brought early than normal to make sure that we were able to get parking on the roadside before the locals arrived for their doggie walks.

The forecast of some rain and strengthening wind didn't put off many people and 21 were at the start point for the walk. In the event there was no problem with the parking and we were ready for the off at 9.45 AM.



An outline of the route we took is given above. This route should be followed and related to a 1:25000 map such as the OS leisure map no 29 of Dartmoor.



first mile or so.

The first part of the footpath was wide and surfaced with hardcore and quite dry.

We anticipated some mud on the walk, given the sort of terrain we were following and we were not disappointed, there was mud and plenty of it. Walking boots are designed to cope with that and mud is easy to get rid of after a walk.

We set off by walking down the road just below the viaduct and then taking the footpath which led us up under the viaduct and alongside the river for the

The River Erme which we were walking alongside was running well, not surprising considering the amount of rain falling on Dartmoor over the past couple of months.



This first section of the footpath is easy and an innovation here is the gymnastic equipment along the route so that keep fit fanatics complete circuit training on parallel bars, inclined benches and the like as they make their way up the riverside in the woods.

Gradually the hardcore surface disappeared and the true surface of soft mud began to take over.



We crossed the first of a few stiles we were to meet on the walk and soon we were picking our way carefully across very muddy ground.

Did everyone keep their footing? Well most did, most of the time.

A few seconds after the picture alongside was taken one rambler managed to check what the mud was like for sitting in. No harm was done apart from a bottom mudpack.

After a mile or so of walk up alongside the Erme through the woods we veered off east and followed the footpath up and out of the woods and onto the higher ground and the fields.

We turned north again and made our way across a field where we stopped for morning coffee.

Following the break we were on our way again across another field.

Off to our right was an old barn shown on the map as King's Barn, it looked very old but well preserved. I wonder how it got its name.



We then left the field and made our way out of the field and onto a narrow rough lane leading us up to the road heading South East to Harford.

At the start of the lane we had a brook to cross.

Luckily there was a form of clapper bridge against a stone wall so save us getting very wet feet.

We emerged on the road at Hall Farm.

We turned right and made our way downhill along the road and passed a couple of lovely looking houses to the right just before coming to Harford Bridge over the Erme.

It is possible to turn left just before the bridge and make your way directly onto the permissive path, with its dire warnings about bulls and the like.

However to do so will mean missing out on a visit to the small hamlet of Harford.



Fran led us on across the bridge and took us up a steep but short climb and into Harford village and its lovely old church.

We stopped to look at the church and the old stone cross in the graveyard.

The old cross seemed very old indeed and I remember being told of the history behind it at one time. I've forgotten it unfortunately.

We then turned right and headed downhill along the Harford to Ivybridge road for a couple of hundred yards.

We soon came upon a footpath leading across fields down to the riverside again and back to Harford Bridge.

This footpath has a couple of wooden slatted small bridges over the two brooks we met en route.

We were soon back at Harford Bridge again and turning through a permissive path that led us along the side of the Erme again, through more woods and along very muddy paths.



Off to our right flowed the Erme and we were surprised to find a group of canoeists making their way down the river and over the large rocks in the river.

They gave us a cheery wave as they passed us in their strange looking short canoes.



We were soon leaving the wood emerging out through a gate by a dry stone wall for a hardish steep climb up the hill leading towards Tristis Rocks.

Hard and steep it was and after ten minutes of exertion we were at the top near Hall Plantation and onto Burford Down.

It is possible to cut across a little and so ease the steepness of the climb. However even in winter when the bracken is down, it is quite difficult and uneven terrain and it is easier to right up to the top keeling to the side of the dry stone wall.

We made our way along the contours for the short distance to the imposing Tristis Rock.

On most walks from Harford we make our way along the other side of the valley and look across to this rock.

As far as I can recall, this was the first walk to actually visit Tristis Rocks in the last 6 years of walking with the group.



There were great views from this local high point across the Erme to the Tors on the other side and up the valley itself to one of the only three old oak woods left on Dartmoor.

The one we could see was called Piles Wood, not yet open access land but I imagine it will be soon when the area is mapped from designated open access land.

Leaving this imposing rock we made our way west across Burford Down until we reached a good example of a stone row.

We followed the stone row due north across first Burford Down and then across to Yadsworthy Waste.

As the date of this walk this land, so obviously moorland, is still enclosed land and only open to us courtesy of the permissive path up out of Harford Bridge.



In 2005 we hope that we will find this graded as open country under the CROW legislation.



To get to Yadsworthy Wast we had to go through a gap in dry stone wall which separated Burford Down from the Waste.

We made our way along the east side of an old field dry stone wall up to an exit through a gate onto open access land on Dartmoor.

We stopped at this point for lunch sitting under the dry stone walls trying to keep out of the worst of the stiff westerly wind that was getting up.

Once through the gate we turned left and headed west along a moorland track that headed first to a SWW water treatment works and then down to New Waste Car Park where some of us had started walks on numerous occasions.

Before reaching the water treatment works partially hidden by trees we dropped off the moor and over a stile to make our way south west and around the water treatment works.

We crossed over an old clapper bridge and then made our way down to near the New Waste Car Park.



Before reaching that car park we swung south again and headed over New Waste Down and onto the track, via a gate turned left and then walked along the track leading to Yadsworthy Farm.



We were only on that track for a few yards before we turned south again and made our way along a very muddy lane.

It seemed only used by tractors and we waded and picked our way through the muddy pools along the track.

We headed more or less due south for approaching a mile until we came out to the road linking Harford and Cornwood at a point called Hall Cross.

A look at the route shows that we were only a few hundred yards further along the road than we were when we first reached it at the place called Halls Farm, when we turned right and walked across to Harford.

We crossed the country road and continued along another very muddy lane heading SSW and gradually up to and onto Hanger Down.



Hanger Down is a lovely grassy down, albeit muddy along the bridleway that we were following up to the local high point.

This is a splendid circular copse, visible from miles away with the name of Hanger Down Clump.

This looked and excellent spot for a nice afternoon cup of tea and Fran led us into the copse and neatly exercising leaders privilege grabbed the only wooden seat in the copse.

It was a nice break after all the mud.

After 10 minutes we were off again on our way for the final lap across Hanger Down and back to our cars at the viaduct about 1.5 miles south of us.

It was easy walking across the down, soft underfoot but easy walking across the short cropped grassland.

Looking back there were good views of the circular clump of trees we had been sitting under a few minutes ago.



Ten minutes or so later we passed what looked like a covered reservoir to our right.

Just beyond the covered reservoir the down narrowed into a Vee shaped exit from Hanger Down.

The exit led into a narrow track which linked Hanger Down to the down overlooking Ivybridge itself, Henlake Down.

Henlake Down is unique in the area, in that it is the only place for miles which has a footpath running 360 degrees all round it.

We could have gone over the top of the down and made our way back that way but Fran decided to lead us around the footpath anticlockwise on our way down to the viaduct close below.

The western fringes of Ivybridge could clearly be seen below us.

It is quite amazing just how the town has developed over the last 25 years from a small village almost into the sprawling town it is today.



Around the down we walked for a few hundred yards and then we left the down through a gate and back into woods for the final short link down through the woods to the viaduct.



Just before reaching the road leading down to the viaduct we passed through a small tunnel under the track leading up to a house.

Shortly after that the walk was over, we emerged onto the road just a few yards up from the viaduct and our cars.

It had been an excellent walk and we had been very lucky with the weather. Yes there had been a shower or two but those soon passed and we enjoyed some long sunny spells.

It was nice to do something different and the visit to Tristis Rock certainly was a new walk to many of the ramblers.

So what was left for some of us to do but to pop into the Bridge Inn and meet the new landlord and landlady. They made us really welcome and we had a good chat with them on the merits of walking and of course on the merits of finishing with a visit to their pub.

You never know we might even see one or both of them out walking with us one of these days.