

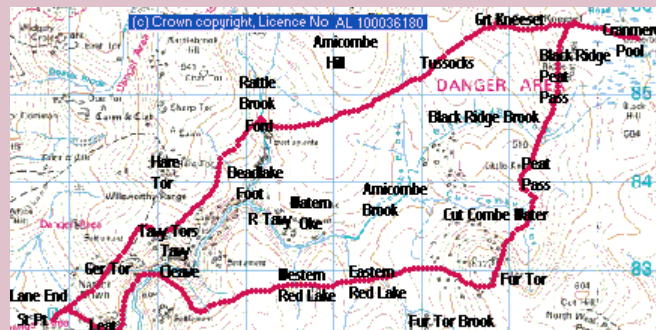
TAVY CLEAVE, FUR TOR AND CRANMERE POOL - 23 SEP 01 (14 MILES)

START POINT: LANE END GRID REF:534823

Fur Tor and Cranmere Pool have long been regarded as difficult places to walk to on Dartmoor, not because of their locations in the middle of firing ranges but rather because of their relative remoteness and the difficult terrain to be traversed in reaching these places.

This 14 mile recce was carried out by 7 of the Plymouth Group on the 23rd Sep 01. It was an ideal day for walking on Dartmoor with cool temperatures, excellent visibility and at the end of a long dry summer, low river levels and dry conditions underfoot.

Most walks on Dartmoor offer the walker a challenge. This one ranks with the best, both in terms of the terrain, the places visited and the sheer magnificence of the vistas unfolding as the walk progresses.



Lane End is situated relatively close to Tavy Cleave and it is reached by turning off the Tavistock to Okehampton Road at Mary Tavy and following progressively narrower lanes through Horndon until the lane runs out, just under a half mile south west of Ger Tor, which sits high above Tavy Cleave.

An outline of the route we took to Cranmere Pool and back is shown above and some of the points we visited en route are annotated on this outline. Obviously this crude outline should be related to a suitable ordnance survey map of the area. The recognised best map to use is the OS outdoor leisure no 28 1:25000 map of Dartmoor.



We set off from Lane End Car Park at 10.00 AM and walked uphill north east for a few hundred yards until we reached a leat which carries water from the Tavy around to above Mary Tavy.

There is a bridge over the leat, we turned right by the bridge and headed south east before swinging round north as we entered the magnificent Tavy Cleave, a very steep sided rock valley with the Tavy flowing

quickly through it.

We continued along the leat side until just before the leat take off point, immediately under Ger Tor high above us to the North East.

Since the river levels were very low, we were able to easily cross the River Tavy at this point. It wouldn't be possible however to do this after a period of heavy rainfall so be warned.

Having crossed the river the next hurdle was to make our way up and out of the Cleave. It is very steep, so straight up was not considered a good option. Instead we climbed up as we headed east, still climbing steeply.



Standon Hill was high above us and to our left was a gert leading down to the river below. We got to near the top of the gert and crossed through it and continued to climb up as we continued east.

As we got towards the top of the hill we could see a large Tor about two miles away to the East. This, Fur Tor, was our first major target point, it looked a long way away, but we made good progress across the relatively level terrain ahead of us, everything being

relative of course.

We had two brooks to cross, these were Western Red Lake and Eastern Red Lake but these were relatively easy. As we made our way towards Fur Tor we could see the top of Tavy Cleave and a number of Tors off to the North.

We could pick out Amicombe Brook and Amicombe Hill which we would be trying to get across on the return from Cranmere Pool.

Having crossed Eastern Redlake we then had to cross the Tavy once again, still fast flowing but little more than an oversized brook where we crossed it.

No more river now between us and Fur Tor, just a long climb up of approaching 500 ft, getting ever steeper as we approached the summit of this magnificent Tor with its many rocky outcrops.

This fabled place is supposed to have mystic properties and is accepted to be the most remote Tor on the whole of Dartmoor, the one furthest from any road.



We tried to climb up to the top of the Tor but were unable to manage it with the size of the huge granite rocks so we contented ourselves for a few minutes taking in the wonderful views from this high point.

We had reached our first goal, the next one, that of Cranmere Pool was getting on for 3 miles away to the north east and is in the middle of some very difficult upland bog.

With the bit between our teeth we were off again down from Fur Tor heading just east of north down to cross Cut Combe Water. Down just north of Cut Combe Water we found a good spot for lunch. We then set off to find a peat pass which would lead us NNE leaving Little Kneeset off to the West of us.



The peat Pass was one of many in the area which had been cut over a hundred years ago by Mr Frank Philpotts to aid Moorland folk in their passage across the Moor.

Many of these still have a plaque at either end of each of the passes set there by his sons in 1907.

The pass we found bore one of these plaques, a good job too as it bore scant resemblance to anything but a narrow worn track leading us on to overlook Black Ridge Brook.

With the low water levels we were able to cross the brook and the marshy area around it with no problems whatsoever.

We then continued on a bearing of about 015 degrees looking for a much longer peat pass, again constructed by Mr Philpotts all those years ago. We made our way up the hill on a broad front hoping that someone would see the start of the pass.



Luckily at least one of us did although neither of us who were supposed to be leading the recce.



This 3/4 mile long pass was much more distinct than the previous one as it made its way through huge peat banks, the relics of the days long ago when the peat cutters carved out a living up here.

The actual route through the peat workings, very extensive in places, is also marked by strategically placed small stone piles. With the amount of peat working in places this proved a boon in guiding us to the far end.

Once again the peat pass had the distinctive plaque at both ends describing why Frank Philpotts had constructed and maintained these remote peat passes, over a century ago.

We were almost at Cranmere Pool, but not quite. Off to the east we could easily pick out the hut at the top of Hangingstone Hill and I knew that if we headed towards that we would soon find Cranmere Pool.

We set off due east picking our way around the Moorland bogs which abound in the area. Even though it had been very dry for weeks there were still pools of peaty water to avoid.

About 500 yards of careful walking to avoid these bogs and we could see the shallow dip in the ground which is Cranmere Pool today.



In addition we could also see getting on for 20 ramblers who had obviously been taking a break having reached their target also.

The group turned out to be Taunton Ramblers who had approached it from Belstone Car Park and I would imagine came to the well known letterbox from Hangingstone Hill.



We exchanged greetings and they were off, leaving us to savour the area. People have been making their way to this point for centuries now and the first recorded 'tourist' trip was by John Andrews, a Devon lawyer, in 1789.

Such was the popularity of the 'pool', long since drained incidentally, that in 1854, one of the moormen guides for the tourists, built a small cairn at the pool for visitors to leave their visiting cards and also a visitors' book for people to sign.

This became the first letter box on the moor and there is a visitors book and letterbox stamp for people to use to reach this remote point. We duly signed in, stamped our letters and cards and felt pleased with ourselves. It was 2.15 PM and it had taken us over 4 hrs, including breaks to reach the pool. We now had to get back to Lane End.

We retraced our steps back to the Black Ridge Peat pass and then headed off west towards Great Kneeset, less than 1/2 mile away, and yet another point that I had never visited before.

Initially uphill our track soon levelled out although the ground descended steeply away to the north to a valley known as Jackmans Bottom.

By following the contours and remaining on fairly level ground, it was easy to avoid the upland boggy area between us and Great Kneeset.



Great Kneeset appears to be a small outcrop of rock and from the direction we approached it is fairly insignificant. Beyond Great Kneeset to the north, west and south the ground falls away steeply. and there are excellent views of the moors all round the local high point. We spent a few minutes orientating ourselves by picking out points of interest.

To the north we could see Lints Tor and West Okement Valley and west across the valley to Amicombe Hill where I had struggled with the tussocks in the fog a few weeks before.

From Great Kneeset we decided to head south west in a virtually straight line back to Lane End, some 4 to 5 miles away.

We headed off and soon found the going becoming progressively tussocky and hard even though we were going downhill. Tussock walking is sometimes very difficult and the half a mile descent down to and across Amicombe Brook, very narrow where we crossed it, was as difficult as I imagined it could be.



The area in the vicinity of the brook was reedy and quite damp but we all made it across the brook with just the odd fall or three.

On the other side of the brook we began an easy ascent of the southern extremity of Amicombe Hill. The going was significantly easier than the previous section, with easy to follow tracks and much shorter grass.

Although slightly uphill we kept to the north of the top of the unnamed hill. The ground then dropped away again down to the Rattlebrook and Deadlake Foot.

There was what appeared to be a small gert running west and we made our way to the northern side of the gert and followed it most of the way down.

Across the other side of the Rattlebrook there was a clear path leading up from the brook and, guessing that there was likely to be a ford where it met the brook we veered slightly north and descended to where the track met the brook.



Although not a real ford it was relatively easy to cross the brook at this point and we were able to cross without getting wet feet.



Once over to the other side it was very easy to follow the rough track up and out of the valley towards DeadLake, a marshy area with a stream running down to Deadlake Foot and into the Rattlebrook and thence down to the Tavy for its fast descent down through Tavy Cleave.

The track continued on up towards Hare Tor high above us to the west.

We left the track just beyond Deadlake and followed the contours around overlooking Tavy Cleave where there are superb views of the Cleave to be had.

We followed the contours round climbing slightly up to Tavy Tors where once again there were magnificent views looking south down the Cleave and back up the Cleave.



Having enjoyed the spectacle of Tavy Tors we swung more north west passing an iron age settlement en route marked by boundary stones and then back south west again up to Ger Tor, the final Tor of the walk.

Below us, about 500 ft lower in fact and just under a mile south west we could see our cars in the car park at Laneend. It really was all downhill from Ger Tor.

We made our way down follow the track. initially quite steeply avoiding the clutter and then less steeply as we approached the leat we had walked up to 6 hours before. Over the bridge across the leat and the final easy descent to the car park again.

We were back in the car park by 4.30 after a good estimated 13 to 14 mile walk which had taken us 6.5 hrs. Interestingly we had got back from Cranmere Pool in 2 hrs 15 minutes, about right as it was between 5 to 6 miles from Cranmere to the start point.

As mentioned earlier it had taken us 4 hrs 15 minutes to get there, but I estimated we had taken about an hours break en route.

It had been an excellent moorland walk and for me had opened up yet another area of the moor I hadn't walked before. What more was there to do to finish off such a good day out then to drive back to the Royal Standard at Mary Tavy to sample a couple of their real ales and to reflect on what we had achieved on the day out.