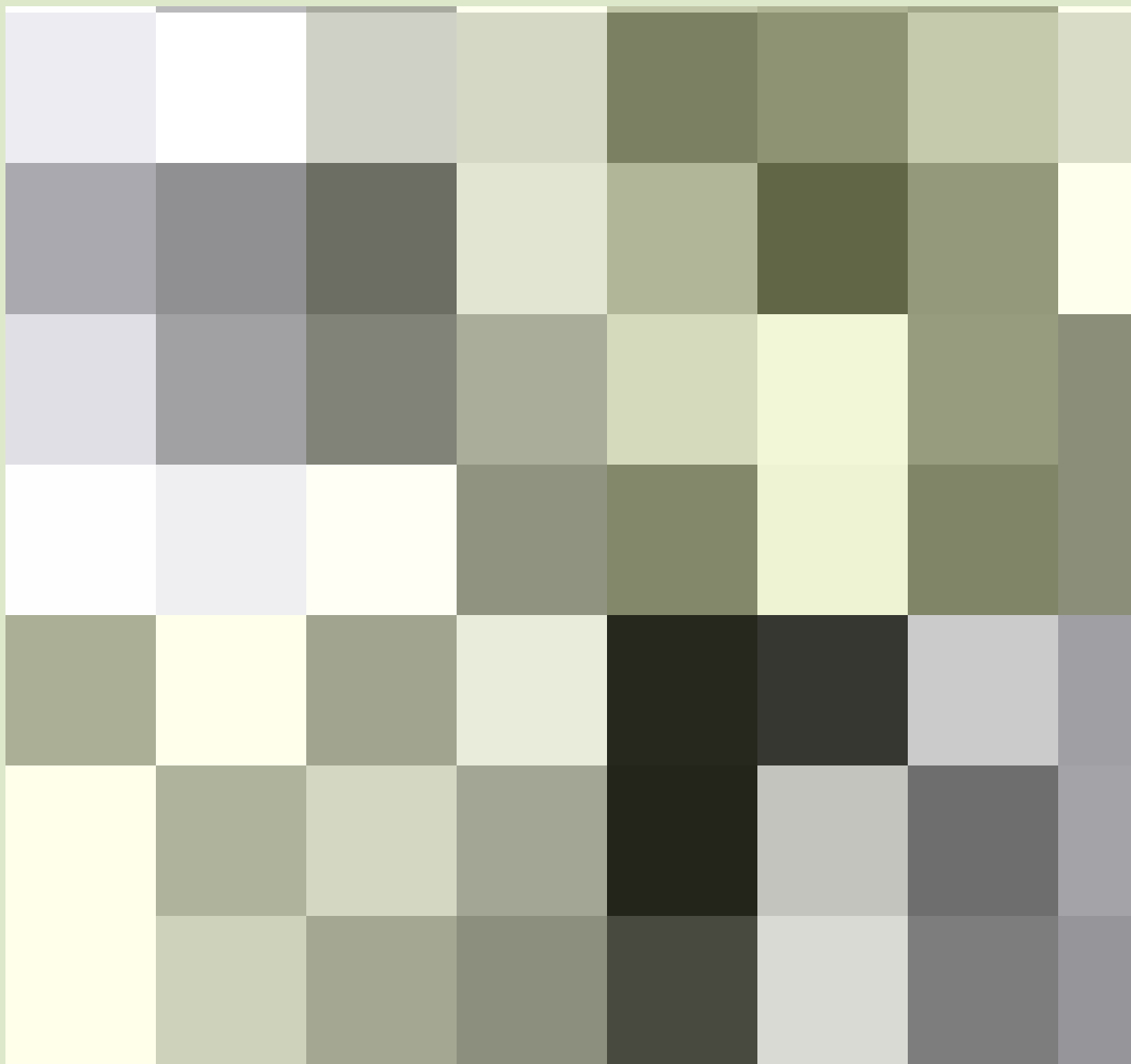


ABOVE TAVY CLEAVE AND TO FUR TOR AND CUT HILL
START POINT: LANE END CAR PARK GRID REFERENCE SX 534823

Some walks are harder than others up on Dartmoor and a walk out to Cut Hill and across miles of tussocks certainly fell into the harder category. Despite this difficulty or perhaps because of it 17 intrepid walkers gathered together on 25th July 2004 ready for a 10.30 off led by the intrepid navigator Fran Allen. This 10 to 11 mile walk was certainly not one for wimps, as we were to find out.

Luckily there was a good cooling breeze blowing and it was dry. What we definitely didn't need was a hot day and no wind, conditions which had prevailed a year before on a different walk out to Fur Tor.





The outline of the route we took is given above. It should of course be studied in conjunction with a decent 1:25000 map of the area such as the OS leisure map no 28 of Dartmoor.

Although it wasn't warm within 10 minutes of the start of the walk from Lane End we certainly were nicely warmed up as upon leaving the car park we had a climb of approaching 500 ft height gain in just under the first mile as we raced our way up to Ger Tor.

Initially we made our way up to cross a leat which flowed out of Tavy Cleave and beyond the leat a progressively steeper uphill section upto Ger Tor.

The climb was well worth it as the views from Ger Tor at the top of the climb were brilliant giving us superb views up Tavy Cleave.

Once up there we had relatively easy walking for about a mile, with minor ups and downs, as we made our way up high above the Cleave, along first to Tavy Tors and then on towards the top of the Cleave and a descent down to cross the Rattlebrook.

Tavy Tors are a group of Tors sitting north east of Ger Tor with the largest outcrop meriting its own name that of Sharp Tor.

As we made our way along high above us to the north was Hare Tor, another Tor to visit on another walk.

Continuing along walking parallel to, but high above the Tavy down in Tavy Cleave we made our way across to another group of Tors.



These are several rocky outcrops collectively known as Tavy Cleave Tors. Although doubtless they all have their own individual names the only one that I know of is Sharp Tor, one of several similarly named tors on Dartmoor.

Sharp Tor is the highest and most prominent of the Tors in the Tavy Cleave Tors group.

Beyond Tavy Cleave Tors we followed a relatively good path heading North East and slightly away from the Cleave itself. The track we were on gradually descended and then steeply so as we made our way down to cross the first of a few brooks we would negotiate on this walk. This first brook is known as the Rattlebrook and the crossing point is called Deadlake Foot.

The crossing was very easy across some prominent rocks, so no wet feet here. Once across we climbed slightly and then followed the line of the brook as it flowed down to swell the River Tavy.

On a nice vantage point on some rocks above the brook we stopped for our morning coffee.

After the first break, we made our way south east uphill and then along the contours of the area shown on the map as Watern Oke. We passed by two prominent and quite unappealing tin huts which we took to be military storage huts, we were in a firing range after all!!



Keeping high enough to skirt the clutter which abounded in one area of Watern Oke we again walked parallel and above the River Tavy, now out of the Cleave but still flowing through a valley with Watern Oke on one side and the lower reaches of Standon Hill on the other.

Just beyond a valley to the south of us across the Tavy (shown as Western Redlake on the 1:25k map) Fran led the group down to nearer the river to walk along the river up to where another brook joined the Tavy, Amicombe Brook by name.

It is a case of crossing the Tavy below where the Amicombe joins it, in which case you have to cross it again further up or wait until you come to the Amicombe and cross it just the once. After a relatively dry spell both options were quite feasible but it could be a very different proposition after heavy rain.

Once we were all across we headed more or less east across relatively damp ground and then up increasingly steeper moorland as we made our way up towards Fur Tor about 2 km to the east of the river Tavy and sitting about 170 metres (500ft or so) above it.

As we approached this majestic Dartmoor Tor it was quite steep and there was some clutter to negotiate. Having said that, this approach from the west was one of the easiest I had tried.

The ground gradually flattened on this rocky plateau with several large outcrops, any of which could be a Tor in its own right.



Fur Tor is said to be the most remote tor on Dartmoor and pixies are said to gather there at certain time. On New Years day many walkers make their way up to this Tor to welcome the New Year and enjoy a New Years day drink.

We didn't take any alcohol to celebrate our arrival at this well loved Tor, but we did take lunch and one of our group did go the extra few metres to climb to the top of the highest rockpile of Fur Tor as countless others have done over the previous 200 years.

After lunch we were off again this time across to Cut Hill about 1km to the south east of Fur Tor and at over 600 metres one of the highest points on Dartmoor, in fact it is only 15 metre lower than High Willhays, the highest point on Dartmoor and indeed in the whole of South West England.

The going across to Cut Hill was deceptively easy following a very well defined track which skirted around Cut Combe which dropped steeply away to the north of us.

This is a huge bowl of an area through which Cut Combe water flows down to join the Amicombe and thence into the Tavy.

The panoramic moorland vista which opens up from the top of Cut Hill is quite majestic, it really is a 360 degree moorland panorama of Dartmoor without a house to be seen, just wild moorland all around.



I could have spent an hour or more here simply picking out points I had visited over years of walking Dartmoor, an amazing vista and one every Dartmoor walker should aim to see from Cut Hill.

We celebrated with a group photograph and then made our way south for a couple of hundred metres to take a look at the Philpotts peat pass which is used when approaching this pinnacle from the south east.

The peat pass has a lovely name, the North West Passage and it is a safe approach across some very boggy and certainly tussocky high moorland.

All we now had to do was to return to Lane End, about 6 kms to the west as the crow flies.

But we were not blessed with the ability to fly and the moorland between us and our cars is some of the roughest tussocky areas on the moor, with plenty of nasty holes to avoid as well.

Not all of us managed to avoid them by the way, there were a few falls but no submissions as Fran led us back across this difficult going.



Fran led the group with aplomb in a gentle arc south west above Fur Tor Brook and then across and down through Tavy Hole, up the other side, quite a steep hole or depression in the ground and the tussocks were gently testing en route.

After Tavy Hole I have it on authority that there was a narrow track heading west across the tussocks.

I took a slight detour to first have a look at Fur Tor Brook then to head west, crossing the Tavy and up and over a particularly rough tussocky area and so onto Eastern Redlake bog.

My reason for my diversion was that I wanted to see how the military track route had recovered over the one year. I could barely see it in the boggy area but could see it rather more easily to the south west of the bog.

I met up with the rest of the group again to the south of Western Redlake Brook and they had also been following a moorland track for a kilometre or more.

Off to the west, about a kilometre away we could see the high point of Standon hill. Fran led the group along following the range boundary markers, quite tussocky again and kept well to the north of the top of the hill.

We could see Ger Tor and above it Hare Tor, looking deceptively close but between us and those tors sat Tavy Cleave and the river Tavy flowing down the steep sided valley.

After a stop for coffee on the side of Standon Hill came the steep descent down to the cleave and the river bed and steep it most certainly was.



We were heading in the general direction of a group of rocks on the lower reaches of the western side of the Cleave. These rocks are known as Nat Tor.

The river bed here is a mass of large granite rocks and with the river level very low then crossing the river across the rocks was very easy. Once again it would have been quite a different proposition in the winter or after prolonged rain.

Once across the river it was a short steep ascent up to the side of the leat which flows out of the Cleave to carry water across and around the contours to the Wheal Jewell reservoir, now used as one of the water feeds for hydro electric generating plant at Peter Tavy.

We followed the leat as it swung round and out of this rugged but beautiful moorland cleave and crossed the leat over a clapper beyond Nat Tor and near to NatTor farm.

After such a prolonged section of moorland tussock walking it felt strange to be on a granite chipping track again which led us back along the side of a dry stone wall and so back for a final easy few hundred metres to the Lane End car park once again.

It had been a very good walk of about 10 miles and had allowed us to sample a range of different moorland terrain, have some great views, visit some of the most remote spots on Dartmoor and be led with accuracy across some very difficult terrain indeed.

Well done to the leader for all the hard work she must have put in when checking the route and for navigating it so well. As far as I was concerned it was one of the best

moorland walks I have done for quite some time and it was my first every visit to Cut Hill and for most of the others too I bet.

A great walk but anyone considering doing it, should think twice, or indeed thrice and of course should assess the river conditions first, the likelihood of bad weather and more importantly the firing range activity since the walk takes you through all three major military ranges on Dartmoor.