

BERRA TOR ALONG THE TAVY AND RETURN VIA BUCKLAND

START POINT GRID REF: 496694

This walk on the fringes of the moor was led by Helen Rowett on 7th November 99. As we drove towards Long Ash just west of Horrabridge we met Dartmoor rain and fog. Luckily it cleared as quickly as it had arrived and the rest of the day was in sunshine and very mild temperatures.



Quite a few of us congregated at the car park opposite the Long Ash Garden Center, well over 40 of us including a visitor from Japan over here learning English and ramblers from Wales in the Westcountry on holiday.

Helen introduced the visitors and we were off prompt at 10.30 AM for this walk of about 7 to 8 miles.

Leaving the car park we headed north for a hundred yards or so, swung due west for a quarter of a mile and then turned more south west as we followed an easy track through bracken with the Walkham Valley below us on our right.



As we continued along this well marked path we were gradually descending and after about a further half a mile we met our first and as it happened the only Tor we would be seeing on the walk.



Berra Tor is slightly unusual because of the granite which bears a whitish rock almost resembling marble.

This was also the morning coffee break and we took a break here for 10 minutes or so.



Leaving the moor behind us we were dropping down towards the river Tavy and heading almost due south, we soon found ourselves on narrow country lanes, not too many cars came down these narrow lanes as the grass growing in the middle indicates.

We soon found ourselves by the river side with the River Tavy looking very tranquil as it flowed past Hatch Mill, another place I had never been before.

There is a field right beside the river by the mill, ideal for a picnic. Unfortunately it is private land, a no go area for



ramblers.

Hatch Mill now seems to be a stable but it's size and location would indicate that it was a major source of power a half century or more ago.

Passing Hatch Mill and a largish house just opposite, we were soon walking alongside the banks of the River Tavy.



I had often wondered what the river was like upstream of Denham Bridge, but didn't know that it could be walked along as we did today. Yet another plus point for this walk for me! One of many good reasons for walking with the ramblers is that you are always finding new walking routes at least they are new to me.

The River Tavy here is quite beautiful with slow moving sections punctuated by fast flowing sections. Glynn told me about an earlier walk be here where he had seen good sized salmon being taken from the river at this point.



We continued around the bend of the river as it meandered down towards a local beauty spot about a quarter of a mile downstream at Denham Bridge. This section was particularly peaceful, although the weir clearly showed the rate of water flowing after the recent rains.

I remember, and Helen reinforced it, that some 30 years ago this had been a popular commercial daffodil growing location with the flowers being taken by train up to Covent Garden overnight.

With the demise of the railway in the sixties, the daffodils have slowly given away to the rampant bamboo plantation which has now taken over the area.



As can be seen the bamboos have certainly flourished in this sheltered area and is almost taking over the footpath.

After a hundred yards or so we joined a small road coming up from Denham Bridge which we followed uphill for a short distance. On the corner of a hairpin bend we left the road and continued on a track taking us up north east through the wooded valley side.

We had our lunch break by the path in these woods before continuing on through fields, over stiles as we made our way back towards the local population centre.



Leaving the bamboos behind us, we began to walk up and away from the river bank, following the footpath. As we did so we passed some splendid properties with their glorious views down the wooded valley to Denham Bridge and beyond.

The autumnal colours in the trees were splendid and photographs such as these don't really do justice to the setting.

Passing by a farm, we soon found ourselves entering the village of Buckland Monachorum.



I have driven past this village on my way to Bere Ferrers via Denham Bridge dozens of times and I'd never ever visited the centre with its shop and pubs. I must test the local inn one of these days.

Helen had warned us that it would be muddy as we made our way west through farmers fields towards the village. She wasn't wrong in her forecast of mud in the area.



Through the village we went and we walked past the large village church with its steeple.

The footpath out of the village, skirts the church graveyard as it rises towards a field above the church.

We climbed a stile and turned sharp right by the field and made our way down to a brook crossing a relatively new bridge.



The route then took us westwards, up by the brook through a field until we came across the new garden developments which are in hand at the local spring and summer tourist attraction called the Garden House.

We made our way up through the right of way which runs right through the middle of the newly landscaped field. Once this area was simply a grassed area, now it is home to a variety of different plants, shrubs, pools and water courses.



The changes here have been quite dramatic particularly in the field with its landscaped themed areas. As the photograph shows , even at the onset of winter there is plenty of colour and plants for the visitor to the centre to take in. I should add though the main visitor area is closed from October through to March.

Anyone who has not visited the centre should

As the main road swung round a tight corner towards Crapstone, we turned off onto a less busy road which took us more north westerly up past a large manor house back to the edge of the moor once again.

We turned left by the moor and once off road we stopped for the afternoon break before swinging around roughly parallel to the road leading back to Long Ash.

As we followed this final easy 1 mile section of the walk towards the start point car park we passed a very recently still born foal, I could see Helen on her mobile and I believe she was speaking to a local emergency organisation to see if they could find the mare who had lost the foal.

certainly do so in the spring or summer season. The walled garden area of the centre is quite magnificent with a huge range of plants and landscaped gardens. With the recent developments there is even more to attract the visitor.

Leaving the centre, we were on the road from Buckland to Crapstone and with such a large group, Helen had quite a responsibility for our welfare on this busier section of road which she took very seriously.

Notwithstanding the sadness felt by many at seeing the still born foal, the walk had been a success with an interesting variety of moorland, a Tor, riverside and valley walking, enjoyed by all present, particularly in the very late Indian Summer which we have enjoyed recently.

Many thanks to Helen for all the effort she has made in providing us with such interesting walks and for the history lesson which always comes with her leadership.