

MANATON CIRCULAR WALK TO THE STEEP SIDED RIVER BOVEY VALLEY

START POINT: MANATON CP BY THE CHURCH GRID REF: 749813

The walk was planned and organised by Ivan Meads on Sunday 26 Aug 01, the August Bank Holiday weekend. With fine weather forecast 27 ramblers managed to find Manaton through the fog that was thick over the moors and got to the car park in time for the 10.30 AM start of this 8 to 9 mile walk.

The weather was much more cloudy than forecast, perhaps better for walking than in hot sun.



An outline of the circular route we followed is shown above. This outline must of course be related to a suitable 1:25000 map of the area such as the Ordnance survey leisure map no 28 of Dartmoor.

This detailed map will enable you to see the footpaths and lanes we followed around the loop.



We set off from the car park just to the south of the small car park after a briefing on the walk from Ivan.

We took the exit from the car park just below Manaton Church and made our way round the church to pick up a public right of way footpath heading north up and away from the village.

We soon found out why Ivan had mentioned there were a few stiles en route, in fact it seemed like we clambered over half a dozen in the first 10 minutes as we started to climb up in woods to the north of the village.

Ivan had told us that the vast majority would be early on in the walk and we hoped this was true. With



getting on for 30 people out then stiles can spread the group out a long way as each person in turn has to get over the stile.



We made our way up mainly through wooded area, a fairly stiff little uphill section.

Soon we came across a large rock outcrop, called Manaton Rocks, and the footpath took us up and round then to the west side.

From this local high point the views would have normally been quite good. The fog spoilt the view

unfortunately.

Once by Manaton Rocks we headed downhill south easterly through a footpath through ferns.

The path then swung north west again as we made our way by more woods and through fields eventually emerging onto a country road.

The footpaths in this area are very well signposted and the clear instructions on the signposts certainly ease the route following, assuming of course you know where you are going in the first place.

Luckily Ivan knew exactly where he was heading but it was reassuring to see that Devon CC had been so generous in their signposts in this region.



The path then swung north west again as we made our way by more woods and through fields eventually emerging onto a country road.

We followed the road north east and down towards Langstone, all very clearly signed .

By a distinctive white cottage we took the right fork and followed the narrow road down towards the hamlet of Langstone.



After a few hundred yards we turned right off the road onto another lane heading south east and made our way by some very old renovated buildings.

A look at the old windows and lintels clearly showed the seemingly original timbers, I wonder how many hundred years old they are.

Soon we were onto a footpath/lane and heading down towards the River Bovey and our morning coffee break.

We crossed over Foxworthy Bridge and the small hamlet of well manicured houses and cottages and stopped by the river for our break.



The fog was clearing and the views were beginning to emerge.

From the bridge the River Bovey heads down through a steep sided wooded valley. The most well known area here is Lustleigh Cleave with Tors at the top such as Raven's Tor, Nut Crackers and Hunter's Tor. We were not going up that high on this walk however.

After the morning break we made our way along the north east side of the Cleave and soon we were out of the hamlet and into the woods.

We climbed steadily up through the woods as we walked for about a mile through the woods, uphill most of the time with the odd small downhill deviation to ease our path.

Eventually the footpath through the wood emerged out onto a broader track with sign posts indicating a track up to the top of the Cleave in one direction and down to the river and Water in the other direction.



We followed the track down through the woods taking the turning for Water, in this case water doesn't refer to the river but to a hamlet at the top of the valley to the South West.

We soon found ourself out onto the river side in an open area in the woods with an old wooden bridge, made from the split trunk of a tree to take us across the River.

The bridge is near a point called Woodash and I call the bridge Woodash Bridge.

We stopped for lunch on the north side of the river, happy in the knowledge that after lunch we had a steep uphill climb up out of the valley towards our next point, Becky Falls.

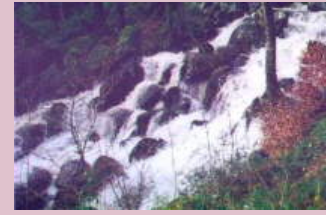
Crossing the river, we headed up a narrow steep track heading south and then south west. Luckily this particularly steep section only lasted a few minutes and we soon came to a signpost indicating the direction to take to get to Becky Falls.

There was plenty more uphill to go, but not as steep as in the first section.

We climbed steadily up southeast for a few hundred yards to the top of the valley by a fence and then we swung more south west along more level ground to emerge where three footpaths came together.

This whole wooded area is known as HoundTor Woods and we remained in the woods and were to do so for a further mile or more.

We could either head downhill again, no! or turn sharp right and up towards Water or continue on along the middle track to Becky Falls.



Becky Falls in winter is worth a visit with a lot of water pouring down over the rocks. The photograph was taken by a paying visitor after heavy rains.

What would we see when we got close today after a period of little rain indeed.



Onwards we went towards the local beauty spot of Becky Falls and the track swung west and up towards the privately owned visitor attraction of Becky Falls.

The owners do not allow walkers to deviate from the right of way to get near the falls without paying. We could just about see the rocks of the falls amongst the leaf canopy and little else.

The photograph to the left shows the slightly restricted view of the falls in high summer!!!

There were certainly plenty of paying visitors there visiting the Falls and marked trails around the area.

We continued along the well marked public right of way footpath and soon we were leaving the noise of the people behind us as we followed the footpath uphill north towards the hamlet of Water.

We came out of the woods and into a field and immediately ahead of us we could see the hamlet of Water. We stopped in the field for a cuppa and then exited the field onto a road and into the village.



As we entered the village we turned off the road to Manaton and headed off to the right along a level road.

A couple of hundred yards along the road we turned left again and then right through some houses and onto another footpath. Just beyond a large house we could either enter the woods again and descend down to Woodash Bridge or turn left and follow the track through the woods and down towards a point on the map half a mile to the north west shown as Horsham.



We came upon a junction with a clear signpost showing us the direction to take to return the last half a mile to Manaton.

We turned left and headed uphill along a narrow track which swung west and uphill towards Manaton and the the car park.

Some fifteen minutes of uphill and we were back again at Manaton, the church and the church hall which seemed to double up as a place to buy cream teas.

The walk had been between 8 and 9 miles and we were back at the car park by 3 PM, four and a half hours after leaving it.

Ivan led the charge by some to the cream teas in the Church Hall and the rest of us thanked him and drove the 30 miles back to Plymouth.

We had indeed been lucky with the weather, it had not been not too hot, the footpaths had been relatively mud free, it can be very wet and muddy in winter, and someone had cleared the paths through the bracken.

This walk had taken us on either side of the River Bovey and most of it was in woods, a change from the wilder moorland just above us out of Manaton.