

PORK HILL CAR PARK CIRCULAR WALK TO STEPHENS GRAVE START POINT GRID REF: 532 752

Sunday the 13th Feb was one of those blank 'no walk submitted' days on the walks programme. As is often the case, usually someone agrees to lead a recce walk on an otherwise blank day. Jack Sycamore volunteered and ten of us arrived at the Pork Hill car park for the walk. Jack had estimated it to be between 9 and 10 miles. Would he prove to be correct??

It was once again Jacks' luck to have a perfect winter walking day. Bright blue skies and next to no wind, we were all very pleased to be there. For most people the temperature was reasonable; for two of us though, it was decidedly chilly. Joy and I had returned from Goa on Friday and had been lazing in temperatures in excess of 30 degrees C in the hot sunshine in the tropics in India. It was probably of the order of 7 degrees up on the moor and we not unexpectedly noticed the difference.

We neither expected nor got sympathy from the rest of the group, I wonder why ??



The map above outlines the route we took from the car park at Pork Hill, heading initially south.

To better follow the route, readers are advised to relate the route and the description which follow to the Ordnance Survey 1:25000 map of Dartmoor.

In the car park were several groups of walkers, some carrying full packs obviously in training for the ten Tors walk and another group of Plymouth Ramblers who themselves were off to recce another walk.

Leaving the car park, at just after 10 PM, we headed due south for about a mile and were soon passing the first of many which we would walk by and for some of them up, during the day.

The descending path at this point was very clearly defined.



The first tor of note was Feather Tor and it stood out well a few hundred yards east of us.



The photograph shows the path very well, quite unusual to have such a clear one.

We continued more or less due south until we were close to Pew Tor.



There were cottages in this area and just south of the Tor we turned north east on about 045 degrees.



Just at the foot of Huckwood Tor we stopped for a short break of ten minutes.

Suitably refreshed, we continued, still north east, passing close to the access stile leading to Vixen Tor.



Although the Tor is privately owned, access is available via the stile. Not for us today however. We continued for a further half a mile over a stream and then swung more north for the first and really the only stiff climb of the day.

We crossed the main road from Pork Hill to Merrivale and continued on up.



As we climbed up towards Great Staple Tor we had excellent views back down to Merrivale, the main road and the Walkham Valley below us.

After the steep uphill section of 3/4 mile we

20 minutes later we were on our way again,

reached Great Staple Tor and gathered together for our lunch break.



On this clear winter day there were excellent views back across the moor to Middle Staple Tor and beyond to Plymouth, the Tamar and the sea beyond.

still heading north.

Following the contours we soon walked just west of Roos Tor.



We continued north following the level contour walking route and could see a wall about 200 yards off to our left.

We cut across towards the wall at the point where it turned through 90 degrees from north east to north west and picked our way through old tin mine workings and streams. The views looking back to the tin workings and back to Great Mis Tor in the distance were worth admiring.



We gradually climbed now heading on a bearing of 300 degrees until we met a rough track which took us below White Tor above us and to the north.

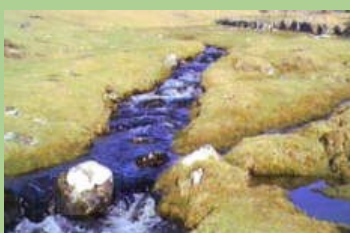
We followed the track, gradually descending on about 250 degrees until we came across Stephens Grave.



Stephen was apparently been thwarted in love and had committed suicide. This led Jack to digress back to his younger days which caused some amusement in the ranks and some comments from the ladies in the group.

Stephens Grave was yet another turning point.

Leaving the grave we headed down now on about 150 degrees to ford a small river.



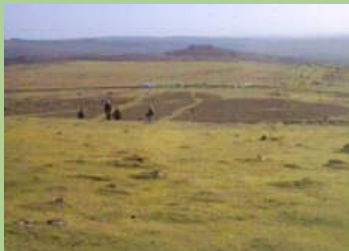
We continued to make our way up, not steeply but upwards nevertheless until we stopped for afternoon liquid below the Tor.

There had been some rain recently on the moors and the stream was running well. We all managed to cross it with no problems and we passed through a gate and then swung to about 200 degrees across a field and then the open moor up towards Cox Tor about a mile south of us.



Jack advised us that we could now swing around under the Tor following the contours for an easy descent back to the car park about a mile away.

The exploits of his youth had obviously affected him.



He promptly started climbing up towards Cox Tor swinging around it across a scree field and some boulder hopping.

All but three followed him and comments were beginning to be heard.

The three who followed the contours around were clearly taking the longer but easier and faster path and were soon well ahead of us.

From near the top there were excellent views down to the car park now only about a half a mile to the south of us.



After the final downhill section, we were once again back at the Pork Hill car park where we regrouped at just about the same time, about 2.30 PM, as the other group of ramblers from Plymouth Ramblers who had been receiving a completely different walk.

The photograph shows the section we had just descended from Cox Tor back to the car park.

We checked our distance meters and Jack had been spot on with his prediction, we had walked about 9.5 miles in all and had enjoyed a brilliant winters day walk in excellent walking conditions.

During the day we too had completed a walk around ten Tors, check the write up and you'll find ten Tors mentioned, not all of them climbed I'm pleased to say but plenty to look at nevertheless.

After ice lollies for some, who had obviously decided that summer had come early, we were on our way back to the car share point and back to Plymouth by about 3.30 PM.