

POSTBRIDGE BELLEVER TOR, BRIMPTS FARM AND THE EAST DART START POINT: POSTBRIDGE CAR PARK GRID REF: 648789

Postbridge is a popular starting point for Dartmoor walks with some lovely walks north and south of Postbridge. Other reasons for it's popularity include the large car park, good toilet facilities and of course the Dartmoor National Park Information Centre adjacent to the car park.

Maurice Taylor had planned a walk of between 9 and 10 miles heading south out of Postbridge across the moors by three Tors and down to just north of Dartmeet, with an option to go to Dartmeet in the event of the East Dart being in flood.

On Sunday 5th October 03 the East Dart certainly wasn't in flood, following one of the driest Summers and early Autumns for many years.

We were able to cross the East Dart easily (for most) without the need to go down to Dartmeet, using large stepping stones about a half a mile north of Brimpt's Farm.



The outline map of the route is given above. This should be related to a good 1:25000 map of the area such as the OS leisure map no 28 of Dartmoor.

Seventeen of us gathered at the Postbridge car park on a cool, crisp and sunny Autumnal morning ready for a 10.30 AM start.



After the usual announcements we were soon striding out of the car park by the side of the Information Centre.

We turned sharp left and made our way to and across the main road and so on into Bellever Woods.

There are at least three wide paths radiating out in different directions through the woods and we soon found the one we wanted. It led us due south through a gate on a steady climb up to the moorland beyond the woods.

It was an ideal walking day and we were soon leaving the woods and heading up to the first of the Tors of the day, Bellever Tor.

There is a broad path leading directly up for an easy ascent to the top of the Tor. Bellever Tor has a trig point right at the top of the Tor and it is easy enough to get right up beside the concrete trig point.



The views from the top are unimpeded in all directions and we spent a pleasant 10 minute morning coffee break at the top enjoying the splendid views all round, particularly clear views too on such a lovely morning.

Leaving Bellever Tor we headed due south down to the corner of two dry stone walls and through a gate/stile and then we swung more south east.



Ahead of us was the second Tor close to our path, Laughter Tor by name.

We didn't visit Laughter Tor but kept it to our left as we followed the public right of way.

This right of way took us directly to a standing stone from where there is a track leading up to a

sheeps pound and beyond to the Tor itself, should you wish to visit it.

We stopped to look at the standing stone and then we continued along the track still heading south east virtually in a straight line. Through another dry stone wall and then onto the rocky outcrop that comprises Huccaby Tor.



The 1:25000 map does indicate that there is at least one stone circle in the vicinity although I didn't spot it on the walk.

Leaving Huccaby Tor we continued south east along the track and descended down for a further kilometre to emerge at a gate which led us out onto a moorland road that links Two Bridges to Dartmeet, a very popular and busy spot in the tourist season and indeed busy most Sundays when the weather is good.

We turned left onto the road and made our way along, keeping to the right hand side and definitely single file on this relatively busy section of road. There was a plantation off to our left and we soon made our way past the turning down to Hexworthy and beyond to Venford Reservoir.



We continued along the road heading on towards Dartmeet.

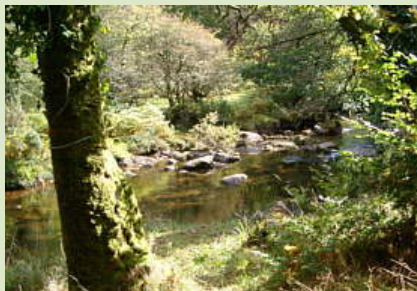
As mentioned earlier, had the East Dart been running high we would have walked down to Dartmeet to cross the river but there was no need to do so on this walk.

We soon reached the sign advertising the Brimpt's farm complex in the woods off to our left and we left the country road and followed the track leading up to the hotel and conference centre.

We skirted around the many building comprising the hotel and followed the right of way as it dropped down into the steep sided valley through which the East Dart flowed. Across the other side of the valley right at the top and a very steep section sits Yar Tor.



It is quite a climb up to Yar Tor but again it wasn't on the planned route for this walk.



The road we had left minutes earlier marked the southerly extreme of the walk Maurice had planned and beyond the hotel we would be heading generally north back to Postbridge, keeping close to the East Dart whenever we could.

We emerged out into a field and then through a gate into woods with the East Dart just a few metres off to our right.

This was a lovely sheltered spot and Maurice had chosen his lunch break point wisely, right beside the river in a little clearing.

We enjoyed a full 30 minute lunch break point in this sheltered spot and then we were off again making our way up through the plantation keeping very close to the East Dart as it tumbled among the large boulders clearly visible with the river running so low.



After a few hundred metres the river swung west and directly ahead of us lay or crossing points, a series of large stepping stones right across the river. They were clear of the river by at least two feet, very different to the last time I crossed them when the river lapped the very tops of the stones.

Most of the group managed to cross the stepping stones with no bother at all although one or two displayed a reticence to move from stone to stone.

With help from the leader all got across unscathed and without taking an early bath.



We had crossed the East Dart and now there was another little river to our right, this one is called the Walla Brook. We continued along the side of the Walla Brook for again a couple of hundred metres until we came to a Clapper Bridge which gave us an easy crossing of this small brook.

Just beyond the brook we passed by another walking group from Plymouth sitting having their lunch.

Quick hellos and we were on heading north and shortly after we came to a very narrow country lane.

Turning left onto this lane we followed it across a bridge over the Walla Brook and so on to the entrance to Babeny Farm, one of the many farms owned by the Duchy of Cornwall and carrying the emblem easily recognised as Cornish to locals.



We made our way up to and through the farm, by the rows of stable doors it appeared as if Babeny Farm was now also riding stables. Off to our right there were two people grooming horses.



We continued up and out of the farm following the clearly marked right of way leading a winding path steeply uphill heading generally north west up to the edge of Riddon Down.

Had it been very wet we could have stayed high and walked along Riddon Ridge but because of the dry conditions we were able to drop right down to the edge of the East Dart river once again and so to the Laughter Hole stepping stones which we could have used if we had needed.

Rather than crossing the East Dart we turned right just before the stepping stones and proceeded to follow the East Dart just west of north for the next mile or more right up to Bellever Bridge, the next point where the river could be crossed.

Although we were able to make our way along, initially across a difficult boulder strewn path where the river had overflowed at times and scoured the soil from around the rocks, we were soon on easier going again, our progress only impeded by the large gorse bushes which will, I imagine, in time make this route virtually impassable.



Off to our right we could see the ruins of some buildings which were named on the 1:25000 as the site of Snailly House, so named because a hundred years or more ago two spinsters lived in and existed predominantly on a diet of snails, which they pickled and kept stored in the house.

Once again the going across a normally flat and boggy was quite different to how I remember it.

On this walk it was very dry, although the evidence was there that there had been a bog there and would be again once the winter rains are with us.



However the going remained easy and we could see that we were approaching a car park as there were increasing numbers of people around. Across the river in Bellever Woods we could see the cars parked. The river was so low it was possible at one point to cross it on the normally submerged boulders. One of our group proved this was possible by doing just

that.

We kept to the east of the river and as we turned a corner the beautiful Bellever Bridge with the half collapsed large clapper bridge in front of it made an imposing sight.

We made our way up to the bridge but didn't cross it as we have done on many walks in this area.

Instead we turned onto the road and headed north east uphill for a short distance. As the country road swung east we left the road on a narrow track and continued north east, keeping on open access land paralleling enclosed land off to our right. We skirted around a small wooded area and just off to our left we could see another moorland farm, this one shown on the map as being called Dury Farm.

We headed across to the rough track which led from the main country road down to the farm and headed uphill along the track for about 100 metres, may be a shade more.

Although there is no right of way shown on the map, we came to a stile and a sign indicating a footpath leading off to our left across fields which would take us up to near Pizwell Farm.



We crossed this stile and headed across a couple of fields on our way up to just south of Pizwell Farm but before reaching it we swung off to our left and picked up the public right of way that would take us most of the way back to Postbridge, about 2 km to our north west.



This particular public footpath passes through a low lying area and in wet weather is incredibly muddy, yes there was evidence of how muddy it could be, but now the soft mud was hard baked and we kept very dry boots in this area, the first time I've ever managed that.

The footpath took us across a low lying flat area that is usually very wet, but dry this time and so up through a gate and along a country track through fields heading north west getting closer to the East Dart once again, although we couldn't really see a lot of it.

We stopped in a field for a short afternoon break before the final leg back to Postbridge.

The path is very easy to follow and before long ahead of us we could see a large house, which is in fact the Lydgate House Hotel.



We walked out onto the lane which links the hotel to the main road and followed it along for about 100 metres until we came to a permissive path sign off to our left which cuts out the road walking and took us right down to the side of the East Dart for the final few hundred metres back to Postbridge.



We walked along the path through some normally wet ground right beside the East Dart and very soon we came to the final bridge, Postbridge itself.

Just downstream of the bridge sits perhaps the most majestic clapper bridge in the whole of Dartmoor, a really big clapper bridge that is

so often shown in pictures of Dartmoor beauty spots.

We made our way over this lovely old clapper bridge and so on through a gate onto the main road for the final 100 metres along the road and thence back into the large car park.

When we had left the car park at 10.30 AM ours had been some of the few cars in it, at 3.15 PM when we returned the car park was completely full.

We had been remarkably lucky with the weather, the skies were darkening as we arrived back into the car park and light rain began to fall as we thanked Maurice for leading us so well around this varied 10 mile walk.

Maurice obviously had done his homework on this walk, even to the extent of organising the weather too, yet another enjoyable walk out on the moors for those of us that ventured out.

We reflected on the way back to Plymouth just how lucky we are down here to have such a wide range of lovely walking country right on our doorstep.

