

THE TORS AROUND PRINCETOWN

GRID REF OF START POINT: 840 491

The walk on 12 Jan 2000 was planned and led by Eric Smith who is noted for his compass work and good luck with the weather. The day dawned dry but windy with the threat of heavy rain moving down across the region from the North during the afternoon.

Despite the forecast, we had 12 souls ready in good time for a 10.30 AM start from the Princetown car park. Following a clear briefing of the route from Eric, who indicated the walk was about 10 miles, we set off from the car park across the main road and followed the Abbots Way path up towards South Hessary Tor, just under 1 mile from the car park on a bearing of 152 degrees



At South Hessary Tor, we left the Abbots Way and headed for a trig point across rough and quite wet moorland, on a bearing of 200 degrees. Such was Eric's navigational ability, we walked across the moor for 3/4 of a mile and as we bridged a hill there was the trig point dead ahead. Who could possibly question his navigational skills now?



The visibility was excellent, despite the lowering skies and we had very good views across the moors and the Tors in the distance. No sign of the forecast rain yet.

The next waypoint was that of Crammer Tor and we headed off across the moor on a bearing of 270 degrees and after half a mile, yet again, the Tor was dead ahead. Leaving the Tor to our right we made our way down on a bearing of 240 degrees, skirting Raddick Hill on our right hand side, until we intersected Devonport Leat. Having located the leat, we followed this as it flowed down to the Aquaduct.

We scrambled down the steep section of the descent by the mini waterfall, crossed the aquaduct and stopped for morning coffee. We were making good progress and had reached this point in about an hour. After a 10



minute break we were off again, following the leat down its path on 200 degrees for about three hundred yards.

We then turned right on a bearing of 250 degrees and followed a path uphill which we knew would eventually lead us to the main Yelverton to Princetown Road and to a car park close to Sharpi Tor. The car park was about 1 mile uphill from the aquaduct.

Sure enough, the car park was dead ahead and we skirted it and then headed off slightly downhill on a bearing of 320 degrees along a clearly defined path.

We continued our easy downhill descent and skirted Ingra Tor above us on our right. We followed a well defined track heading towards a farm in the distance and at about 12.40 PM, about 300 yards short of the farm we stopped for our well earned lunch break which was about a mile down from the Sharpi Tor car park. We could see the old railway route and Kings Tor up above us and we knew that the afternoon section of the walk would be more strenuous.

Passing through a gate, we soon turned on a bearing of 060 degrees and made our way a path marked with finger posts through some quite marshy areas. After a section of about 3/4 of a mile of stiff uphill walking we found ourselves on the track of the old railway, just below Swell Tor.

The next mile or so was very easy walking following the line of the old railway as it climbed up towards Princetown. The railway line swung around the mine workings in the region of Kings Tor in a wide arc as it gradually gained height.

As we passed through a cutting, we could see Foggintor and North Hessary Tor and the mast in the far distance.

We left the old railway and turned towards Foggintor on about 080 degrees across open moorland.



After some easy walking and a scramble up a steep slope, we were at the very old workings in Foggintor. There had been massive mining in the area a century ago and the Tor itself has been hollowed out and there is a large pool now with vertical cliff faces behind. In the summer months the Tor area is now used as an outdoor activities centre with canoeing, abseiling and rock climbing for local schoolchildren.

We had a quick break for coffee and we were soon off again on the final section of the walk. Eric's luck was still holding as it was getting on for 2PM and still no sign of the promised rain.

Some of us thought that the last section would be along the line of the old rail route to Princetown but Eric had other ideas. We scrambled up out of the mine workings and headed up towards the high point at North Hessary Tor just under one mile from Foggintor, on a bearing of 075 degrees.

This was the most strenuous uphill section of the whole walk and as we got closer the mast itself grew ever larger as it stood 800 ft above the high point of the Tor itself.

This strenuous uphill section certainly tested the lungs and mine in particular as I was still fairly congested with a cold.

We passed several large stones, perhaps they were stone circles as they vaguely resembled the circles very clearly defined at other points on the moor.

After 20 minutes or so of uphill climbing we were at the base of the radio transmission huts at the base of the mast.



It is easy to forget that the Tor is so called because of a rocky outcrop. There is an outcrop tucked in behind the old buildings but with the magnitude of the mast, the rocky Tor itself is often overlooked.

As can be seen from the photograph, the rocky outcrop certainly merits the Tor designation and

without the buildings and the mast as the major landmark it would be a significant Tor in its own right.

We had reached the highest point of the walk and the views around were splendid, the threatening clouds had been present throughout the day but the promised rain had still not arrived. For the time of the year, the temperatures had been reasonable all day and out of the wind, must have approached 10 degrees celsius. The wind chill factor was quite significant and must have dropped the apparent temperature by quite a few degrees. At this time of the year the absence of cattle, sheep and ponies is quite noticeable, they have all either been taken down to lower levels by the farmers or had gone down of their own accord.



We set off from the top of the Tor on a bearing of 130 degrees for the final 3/4 mile downhill section of the walk for the descent back to Princetown, with the prison on our left. 15 minutes later we were back at the car park, the rain still hadn't arrived and the navigation was spot on.

Thanks and congratulations were passed on to Eric by one and all for his prior planning and his flexible approach throughout the walk.

At 3 PM, we were back in our cars for the return to Plymouth and another good walk had been enjoyed by all present.

