

SCORRITON UP TO HOLNE MOOR AND BACK VIA PUPERS HILL AND ABBOTS WAY

START POINT GRID REF: 704685

The high pressure remained with us on Wednesday 22nd March 00 and 14 ramblers eventually arrived to park by the road just past the pub at Scorrifton. I say eventually because even with a map, the remoteness of the small hamlet led to 3 of the 5 cars missing the turning and left driving around lanes looking for the place.

The 10 mile walk was indicated on the walks list as strenuous and we soon found out why with a long climb from the hamlet up to Holne Moor for the first hour of the walk.



The walk outlined above shows the route taken from Scorrifton and up to the moor via Michelcombe. Those wishing to trace the walk in detail are advised to relate the route to a 1:25000 ordnance survey map of Dartmoor and of course to the description of the walk which follows.

After a very succinct briefing from the leader and planner of the walk, Maurice Taylor, if I recall it consisted of 'Right Lets Go' we were off walking north west through the village and towards Michelcombe about a half a mile north west of us, downhill to start with, and then a slight uphill into the next hamlet.



The moors loomed high above us in the warm morning sun and we knew that a stiff climb lay ahead. Just into Michelcombe we picked up the bridlepath heading west up towards the moors.

We soon found out how steep the climb was to be, the bridlepath rose steeply ahead of us with hedges either side and as we climbed it the layers of clothes started to be peeled off. It was sheltered and probably up to 16

degrees C; it felt a lot warmer with the stiff uphill climb.

After over a half a mile of exertion, we managed to reach the moor and the bridlepath turned into an equally steep



uphill section along a broad stretch of heathland. We met two horseriders making their way down toward the bridlepath but no other walkers.

After several hundred yards we crossed a small bridge over a leat and the short grass path gradually changed to the moorland tussocks of the higher moors.

Still climbing, we followed a path called Sandy Way and then swung more north to avoid having to descend again into a valley leading up to Holne Moor.

We had been climbing for about an hour and a quick check of the map showed that we had climbed rather more than 330 metres or over 1000 feet, a good way to get the blood coursing through the veins.



As we followed the contours towards Holne Moor, we found a nice depression leading down to the valley below, it was probably an old mine working as there were plenty around the area. We decided to have our first well earned break for morning coffee and to recover from the exertions of the previous hour.

15 minutes later we were off again swinging around the head of the valley below and meeting several old mine workings en route, it really must have been a hive of activity in the area a hundred years ago, today just us and a few birds and animals.

As we made our way around the head of the valley and up and down through the mine workings, we came across the remains of what could have been an old stone hut. The roof had long gone and its purpose defeated us. Just below us lay Mardle Head, so I was advised, I guess it is the name of the head of the valley



The next point we were aiming for was to have been Ryders Hill. However we kept rather too far to the left as we made our way south with the sun in our eyes and managed to miss it altogether.

We should have been on a bearing of 250 not 180 degrees, no problems, there were to be more hills and Tors to meet en route.



We continued due south and after a half a mile we met piles of old stones, the remains of yet more workings.

We were up on Snowdon, so there is one on Dartmoor as well as a rather more impressive and higher one in North Wales.

From Snowdon we could see a clear track on a bearing on 160 degrees leading to the next and for us the first Tor of the day, called Pupers Hill. It was about a half a mile from Snowdon to this point and it was very easy walking along relatively flat ground to this outcrop.

From Pupers Hill, there were splendid views across the valley to Huntington Warren across the valley just south east of us. The Avon Dam south of the Warren was not visible from the hill although it wasn't far away from us.



We stopped in the lee of the rocks for our lunch and enjoyed a good half hour break in the unseasonably warm sun, with hardly any breeze to bother us. The only noise was one of a military helicopter flying at low level to the west of us.



After lunch we made our way across to the nearby cairn a hundred yards to our east.

It was to be downhill from here, it really had to be since we had been climbing more or less all morning and were at a local high point.

We were aiming to make our way down to the Abbots Way which ran from the east to west of us, passing between Huntingdon Warren and the Avon Dam.

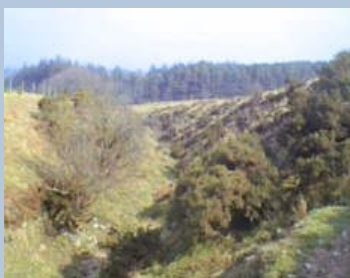
It was such a lovely day that the leader decided to approach it by looping downhill east and then swinging south along a boundary wall rather than the more direct route, or so we imagined!!

We passed yet more rock outcrops on our way down to the edge of the moor below us. There were plenty of maps being studied and compass bearings taken as we determined the best route to take to bring us to the Abbots Way.

From time to time we could just see a part of the Avon Dam a couple of miles south west of us.



The range of compasses available proved rather lucky as the leader, Maurice, managed to drop his en route. After a certain amount of backtracking, it was found on the path and we were on our way again, now climbing up and around a rather more marshy area than we would have met had we followed the more direct route.



Passing the marshy area, we followed the fairly rough terrain just above the boundary wall and continued to gradually make our way towards the plantation to our left.

We could see a gate in the distance and made our way towards it thinking that we had found the Abbots Way.

When we got to it, the sign indicated that it was private property leading to a farm and not the way for us.

Again no problem as it was just a case of following the wall around for a further half a mile until the next gate, which had to be the Abbots Way link gate.

We had found it, as the picture on the right clearly shows. We might have had a little detour but on a day with warm sunshine and light winds it wasn't a problem and served to bring more variety to the walk.



The Abbots Way track was very well defined from this gate and we followed it as it zig zagged across some rough ground before entering the short grass and easy walking south east across moorland pasture land.



Walking was quite quick as we made our way downhill. En route we passed several ponies grazing, not the Dartmoor variety but more like shetland ponies, first Snowden and now Shetland ponies, what is happening up on Dartmoor these days.

We followed the path down until we came to some woodland and a stream with a bridge over it.

Over the bridge and up a rough track, we soon found ourselves on a metalled road. We turned left and followed the road until an intersection at Cross Furzes where we saw a sign to Scorrington, one mile away.

We turned away from Scorrington at this point and followed a narrow road north east, climbing again, which would eventually lead us back up to the moor once again. Before reaching the moor, there was a footpath sign heading on a bearing of 020 degrees across fields.

We descended steeply across the fields, passing a disused quarry building and a wood called Scae Wood. At a suitable point we stopped for afternoon tea before continuing north east down through the wood and onto a rough track which brought us out to houses at the hamlet of Combe, just a short distance from our destination.



On the road again, we turned left across a bridge and then followed the road uphill for the final half a mile north to Scorrington and the waiting cars.

The clouds were just beginning to appear as we thanked Maurice for leading the walk and for bringing such diversity to the route and for testing our stamina during the first hour when we had climbed at least 1000 ft.

At about 3.15 PM we were heading off following the narrow lanes back towards Venford Reservoir and then Hexworthy before picking up the main road back to Two Bridges, Princetown and Plymouth itself.