

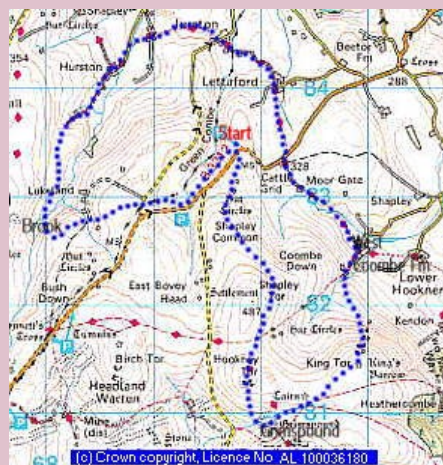
GRIMSPOUND, KING TOR AND PART OF MARINERS WAY

START POINT: SHAPLEY CAR PARK GRID REF: 698824

The moorland walk led by Fran Allen on 28 Apr 02 offered the walkers a varied range of scenery including moorland common, high moor, moorland fringe and fields and lanes. It is not often on Dartmoor that all these aspects of walking can be encompassed into one 10 mile walk.

The views, particularly from the higher Tors such as King Tor were quite magnificent and we were doubly lucky on the day of having superb visibility; we could, as they say, "see for miles and miles" right across to the English Channel off Teignmouth in one direction and right up to the North Moors in the other. The dozen ramblers who ventured out on the day, despite the adverse forecast were well rewarded for their efforts.

On the walks list the walks were entitled a "Double around Grimspound" with actually two walks on offer, a shorter one from Helen Rowett and the 10 miler that Fran led.



An outline map of the walk that we did is shown above. To fully appreciate the route across moorland, lanes and fields, this outline should be viewed in conjunction with a 1:25000 map such as the OS outdoor leisure map no 28 of Dartmoor.

The Shapley Car Park off the B3212 road linking Two Bridges to Moretonhampstead is quite exposed and in the strong wind it was certainly not a place to pass the time of day.

At 10.30 AM prompt the twelve of us set off crossing the road and heading more or less due south up for the first climb of the day of about 400 ft or so leading up to and across Shapley Common and on up to Shapley Tor about a mile from the car park.



About 300 metres from the car park we passed by the first of many bronze age artifacts we were to meet on the walk, that of a hut circle .

The picture of the artifact on the left shows one of the outlines of the huts, looking back to the car park we had left only minutes before.

Some of us stopped to admire the views, not of course to catch our breath, before continuing on up and onto Shapley Common, still climbing.

Across the common we strode and on up to Shapley Tor at 487 m.

We all stopped here to admire the views all round and to try to pick out places we knew from previous walks.

After a minute or two we were on our way dropping down to a dry stone wall and then onto a well trodden path, the Two Moors Way.

As many know, the Two Moors Way traverses Dartmoor and Exmoor and is a popular challenge for long distance walks at over 100 m from North Devon right down to Ivybridge in the South.



This led us right up to Hookney Tor and the highest point we would reach on the walk at 497 m.

We were only on the Two Moors Way for a half a mile but it certainly seemed to be a trunk route with many walkers out, most I suspect in training for the Ten Tors Walk coming up in a few weeks.

Looking south across a valley we could see Hameldon Tor at 529 m, not on our route today

though.

From Hookney Tor there were marvellous views looking down to Challacombe Down and for many miles beyond.

As we left the Tor and headed down on a bearing of about 160 degrees, there in all its glory was the biggest pound on Dartmoor, Grimspound.





To get to it we had to descend about 150 ft and make our way up to the wonderfully preserved circular pound.

Grimspound evokes a picture of just what Dartmoor was like some 2000 years before in the Bronze Age Period.

The outline of the wall were once 15 to 20 ft high and the remains of the huts in the pound were once

the homes of a tribe of Ancient Britons. It is easy to see why these places attract so much attention from preservation and archaeological groups.

At the center of the pound there is a very well preserved outline of the walls of the hut with it's entrance and other features there for people to admire.

Leaving Grimspound, we headed up and off east along a clearly defined track which had we followed it would have led us down and off the moor to the hamlet of Heathercombe.



This was not on our route today though, where a second path headed off to the right we left the main track and headed up towards King Tor and our morning coffee break on a bearing of approximately 065 degrees.



Before we reached King Tor we passed an old grass covered hump which the map showed us was an old, now collapsed, burial barrow called King's Barrow.

A couple of hundred yard beyond we could see the rocky outcrop of King Tor and we made our way to it to try to find a place out of the wind for our morning break.

As we arrived we could see the wonderful vista unfolding in front of us. The moors simply fell steeply away to moorland fringe way below us and for mile upon mile of wonderful views.

From this point we could see the English Channel in the Teignmouth area, Mortonhampstead, Bovey Tracey and even Castle Drogo could be picked out sitting atop the Teign Valley.



We sat and admired these brilliant views, pointing out places we had walked recently, and after the break it was the steepish descent of some 500 ft down to the moorland fringe and West Combe Farm.



On the way down we had to cross a stream and move from moor to the track leading down to the Farm way below.

We made our way down to a brook and lo and behold an easy crossing point and a gate taking us onto the path on down to the old farm.

When we reached the farm we continued on for a few yards to look at a very fine example of an old Ash House.

This is typically a conical roofed structure where hot ashes were stored away from the main house.

This one was very well preserved with it's grass covered roof.

Having admired the Ash House we made our way back to the farmyard and picked up a track up north east, initially along a narrow track and then out and through fields heading more or less north west.



The first few hundred yards of the public footpath was quite difficult to follow as the only signs were the yellow dots on trees, gates and posts to show us the way.



We continued along the track which soon became much better marked.

Later, up near Moor Gate, we found out from one sign that we were walking the Mariners Way.

This old route was used by Mariners as a of getting between ports between the Bristol Channel at Bideford and the English Channel at Teignmouth, without having

to flog all the way by sea down round Lands End.

We followed the Mariners Way, now much better signed, over stiles, and a small bridge over a stream until we saw a large house in front of us.



According to the map this house is at Moor Gate.

The signs led us round the house and grounds onto a narrow lane at the far side as we made our way up towards the road to Mortonhampstead which we had crossed at the start of the walk.



If you look at the map of the route it can be seen that, at this point, we were only a half mile from the Shapley Car Park and our cars. In the event of really bad weather this could be an easy way back to the car park, keeping to the moorland at the side of the road in as far as possible.

The point where we crossed the road is called Leapra Cross and the picture shows why, there is a very old moorland cross just by the gate leading out onto the road. I don't know why it is called Leapra

Cross though.

We crossed the road and over a stile a few yards down the road and swung round north across a number of fields and stiles approaching another hamlet, this one called Lettaford.

There are some very old houses at Lettaford including a really good example of an old Long House where the humans lived at one end and the animals at the other.



Leaving Lettaford we continued on through fields and trackways heading now north west to another very small hamlet called Jurston.



As we approached Jurston, we had to cross a small river which offered two crossing modes, either stepping stones or a small clapper bridge.

Just beyond the stream there was a nicely sheltered grassy area, ideal for our lunch break, in the sun and out of the wind.

After a pleasant rest in the sun we made our way along a track to a small road and the hamlet of

Jurston.

There is a farm across the road called Lower Jurston Farm but what caught our eye was the well maintained garden with its man made birds out of twigs, most likely hazel and a most unusual ballerina which moved in the wind as if she was actually dancing.



Up the hill for a few yards and there was a path off to the right off west across yet more fields and paths towards a farm called Lingcombe.

Going through the farmyard you may have to run the gauntlet of a few guard geese.



They will, given half a chance let you know that they are patrolling this area and need to be watched.

Once through the farm and geese avoided, it is on through a field, over a small stream and on out to a lane for the last small hamlet of the walk, this time it is Hurston, a small group of well maintained cottages and a farmyard.

Make your way up by the thatched cottages and it is at this point that our route leaves the Mariners Way.

Mariners Way swings off NNW and our walk takes us off SSW out of Hurston and up towards the moors once again.

Once you have found the sign posted direction then it is simply a case of following the track through gates as it leads you up along a wide track, wet in places and by an old fishing lake.



About a third of a mile along the wide path you come to a rough track up through a gate and onto the open moor again.



The wind was blowing straight down from the moor and opening this gate seemed to be a two person job.

There was quite a steep climb up to the dry stone wall on our left which is shown as enclosed land on the OS map and not yet open for us to walk across.

We continued to head about 190 degrees out onto the open moor just below Chagford Common.

Take care not to go too low in this area as it is rather boggy and there are some dangerous feather beds to catch the unwary.

It is better to maintain the higher ground until you approach the end of the enclosed land where there is evidence of a disused mine and a crossing point of the North Walla Brook.

As you approach the brook you will see a few stones leading across it. Don't use these, they are quite slippery. Go a few yards further up the brook to where it is narrow, only a foot wide and you can easily step across it without getting wet feet.



Having crossed the brook, a short but steep climb follows up to the top keeping relatively close to the enclosed land.

Simply follow the enclosed land around and you should see the road up above you which will take you back to the car park about a mile away to the north east.

Don't try to follow the enclosed land boundary otherwise you will end up far too far to the west of the car park.

It is much better to parallel the road gradually getting closer to it as you cross a small valley. At the top on the far side you'll see the car park in the distance.

You will cross a road leading down to Jurston.



You have just one more hazard to navigate, a steep sided valley leading down to Jurston.

Make your way to to very near the road at the point where a small stream runs down into the valley and then it is a case of following one of the many narrow tracks that run to the west of the road and so back to the car park.

Although we had managed to avoid the rain for most of the walk the last moorland section had reminded us of the vagaries of the weather with steady rain for the whole of the last moorland section.

When we arrived back at the car park at just gone 3 PM we realised just how windy and wet it had become and the transfer to the cars was rather quicker than we normally make.

It had been a very worthwhile walk for all concerned and thanks were given to Fran for putting it on. For my own part it is always good to find a section of the moor not previously visited and the whole of the section from West Coombe Farm through to Hurston had been just that.

We finished damp but happy at the day out on the moors., ready for the 40 minute drive back to Plymouth once again.