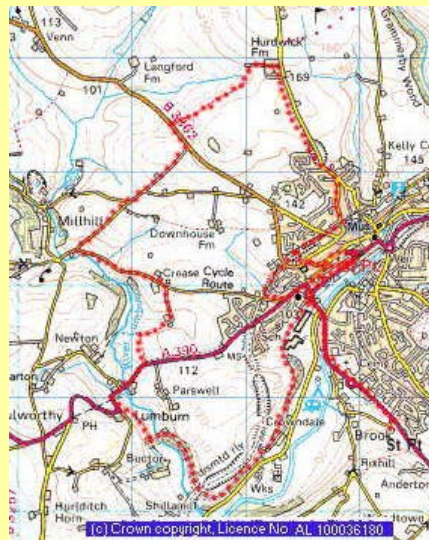


SUN 14TH FEB 99 TAVISTOCK CANAL AREA

START GRID REFERENCE 478 733

100 years ago Tavistock was the centre of a large mining area and the canal linked the town of Tavistock to area called Morwelham Quay which employed thousands of miners in its prime. The canal itself was used to carry all sorts of material, food and equipment to the miners. It still serves a purpose today since there is a Hydro-Electric plant near Morwelham and the canal water drives the plant. We anticipated a walk along the canal in the direction of Morwelham and above the river Tamar but we were in for a little surprise, as we soon found out.



We met at the Safeway car park, and soon found out that this was a very popular walk with the group because they were over 70 member of the Plymouth Ramblers club ready to set off. What we didn't know was that there was to be a significant amount of road walking to be done. The leaders were Michael and Heather Pearce Hillier and they had certainly done their homework for this walk.

We walked the route again on 3 Mar 02 and this time the start point was nearer the centre of Tavistock at the Bus Station just off the Plymouth Road. This cut down on the road walking through Tavistock but there was still quite a bit of road walking en route.



The map above gives the outline of the route we followed. This outline should of course be cross referred to a 1:25000 ordnance survey map of the area such as the OS Explorer 108 map of the Lower Tamar Valley and Plymouth.

We left the car park and walked along the main road leading into Tavistock. We passed the statue of Drake in the centre of the town and then turned

left on the road which led towards Callington.

We followed the road uphill for two hundred yards or so turned right up Crease Hill, over a bridge over the old railway line and then dropped down to a path along the

line. 30 years ago there was a busy and scenic railway linking the town with Plymouth.

It is a pity the line is not active now because I am sure that many commuters from Tavistock would use it.

We walked back along the track for a short while and then stopped for a morning coffee.

We followed along the track over a viaduct with good views of the town and continued for a short distance to the site of the railway station.

We left the old rail track and were soon back on road and through the outskirts of North Tavistock, walking uphill and almost due north.

The route led us along with modern housing developments on both sides and then more to the left.



Nearing the outskirts of the town We followed a footpath up by the back of some houses, just above the road and then over stile into the first of the number of paths through fields.

We continued to walk parallel to the road heading north and over a difficult stile, a short distance further and we turned west along a PROW by Hurdwick Farm and were now heading almost due West.

It was beginning to get quite muddy particularly by gates through fields and some of the stiles were in a poor state of repair. We continued through fields descending until we came to a road which headed away from Tavistock north west towards Lamerton Green.

We turned left onto the road and headed uphill heading south east for a few hundred yards. We then turned right into a narrow white lane which headed south west.

Where this lane met a narrow country road the section was very muddy indeed, above the boots of quite a few of the group.

We then followed the country lane south west as it gradually descended towards Millhill in the valley below. Off to the right we could see the remains of a disused quarry.



Before reaching Millhill we turned sharp left and followed another country lane SE initially downhill and we could see a small stream

meandering along the valley just off to our right. We then had a steep climb up hill towards Crease Farm. We continued on just beyond the farm and then took a narrow lane off to the right which led down to an old saw mill.

Just before the Sawmill we turned right along another right of way along another white lane, uphill and then down again heading just south of west. As we walked along the white lane towards the valley below we turned left and followed a footpath along the side of two fields and out onto the Tavistock to Gunnislake road. We had to



take great care on this section of road, since there was plenty of fast moving traffic, however we were only on it for three hundred yards. We crossed the road and then dropped down through a path with a long disused canal on our right hand side.

Finally came upon the historic canal we had been waiting to see.

This canal section would take us all the way back to Tavistock and we had see the last of the hills.

The canal actually continues on and goes just above Morwellham.

Unfortunately the tow path towards the a mining area of Morwelham was a no-go area as it was privately owned and in any case the canal went through a tunnel on its way to the high ground above Morwelham. We had joined the canal at the furthest point from Tavistock open for access to walkers.



The tow path from here to Tavistock is a popular walk for the locals. There were some interesting sights on the route back and the canal itself was surprisingly clean, and the water in it fairly fast flowing. I understand that is now used for canoeing.



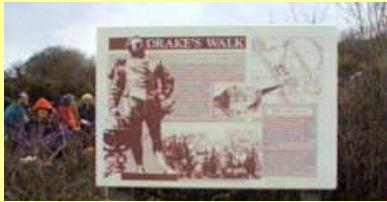
There was an old moving bridge. I thought it could have been used to control the flow of water, but there certainly didn't appear to be any height differential, therefore it couldn't have been a lock. A

careful look at the photo shows it to be simply a swing bridge. Had I stopped and looked at the description which was there I would have known the answer.

Walking further along with tow path we passed under an old railway viaduct which used to link Tavistock with Gunnislake. Strangely the railway



from Gunnislake to Plymouth is still operating, one of the few to escape the Beeching axe of the sixties



We continued along the tow path and before long we came to a small bridge, where we had the afternoon coffee stop.

It appears that Drake was born very close to the spot and there was little plaque marking the location. After the break we continued along the tow path and soon we were back into Tavistock.

Another half a mile of road walking and we were back to Safeways. The second time we walked the route we started from the Bus station and it was but a short distance along the Plymouth Road to that start and finish point Overall, we had been out walking getting on for five hours and we had walked about 8 to 9 miles, but a pleasant day out despite the showers. How many miles of road walking I wonder??



Although we enjoyed most aspects of the walk there was perhaps just as the bit too much road walking in it for my knees liking. It was yet another area completely new to both of us.

This is one of the most pleasing features of walking with the Ramblers, everybody is very friendly and we meet new routes we haven't walked before.