

TAVISTOCK - WALKING THE WHITCHURCH AREA AND STILES START POINT GRID REFERENCE 482 742

Sunday 18th July was a glorious English summer day, clear blue skies, light wind and temperatures rising to the high 70s. Bob Perkins had advertised this ramblers walk as a six mile amble ramble, easy going but with a number of stiles to negotiate. The warm weather brought out a good crowd with over 40 of us meeting in Tavistock for a 11 AM start. There were a few dogs and as it transpired their owners would have a fair bit of dog handling to carry out during this walk. The map below illustrates the route taken on this ramble and together with reference an OS map should enable you to see the detailed route we took.



We had the first half a mile or so up Down Road before we cut through a path leading up to Whitchurch Common and golf course. Right at the top was a pumping station shown on the map as a reservoir, perhaps there is an underground one. The pumping station is also a local landmark and many Dartmoor ponies gather there and from the way they came up to people they obviously are well used to being fed.



We had an easy walk by the golf course and soon we were negotiating the first of what turned out to be a very large number of fences.

Luckily as advertised the walking was easy, but ... the stiles were not, there were all sorts and some very difficult to negotiate.



It is well known amongst ramblers that stiles and large numbers of ramblers make for very slow progress.... and so it turned out to be. At half a minute for each person to get over then up to 20 minutes are consumed for every difficult stile. Oops, Bobs timings were going to be somewhat stretched.



Luckily it has been relatively dry recently and therefore there was very little mud.

One exception, a stile which led to the bottom of a field into which drained a feeding trough overflow. Consequently we all ended up getting muddy boots. Those with open toed sandals had a mud bath!!

There seemed to be stiles every quarter mile or so and that makes for a lot of them.

Progress with the large group was therefore tortuous at times, giving those at the front plenty of time to contemplate the views and whatever else took their fancy.

Bob is in the photograph below. You can almost visualise him from the photograph, scratching his head as he realised that progress was not going to be as planned. There was no way of avoiding the stile hopping which was with us for greater part of the trip when we were away from the common.

The first three miles or so took us generally southwards. To be honest, once we had left the common there were no significant landmarks. We passed through Boyton and down towards some old mine workings. Although we didn't see the village we must have been within a mile of Horrabridge when we turned near the mine workings. We didn't actually see any mine workings, at least I didn't. Probably the most significant landmark was the the mine captains house. This had been renovated and was very attractive with its well maintained gardens. No doubt the owners knew there was a public footpath passing right across the garden!! We made our way through a small wood and we were out into fields for our lunch break at 1.40PM



After the customary half an hour break we were soon heading north. We were on a road for a short distance but were soon walking on moorland grass once again as we crossed Plaister Down. With the warm weather there were lots of people out enjoying the sun. We curved north west across the Down and soon we were passing by some splendid houses at Casey Town, a small hamlet. A short length of road and we were back by the golf course on Whitworth Common with the pumping station on the skyline. The large group could get spread out incredibly easily and we often found ourselves with four hundred yards between the front and back markers.



At 3.40 PM we made it back to the pumping station, about an hour later than Bob had intended. Apparently Bob had cut out 3 stiles but advised us that we had climbed some 16 stiles during the course of the walk, by far the greatest number I had ever had to negotiate during any of the ramblers walks we have been on so far.

We made our way back down over Down Road to the cars and we were soon on our way home. It had been advertised as a six mile walk,

Ivans distance meter indicated over 7 by the time we had reached the pumping station. I measured it carefully using my distance wheel on the map and indeed it was over 7.5 miles.

Relatively easy going it certainly was but the stiles were something else.