

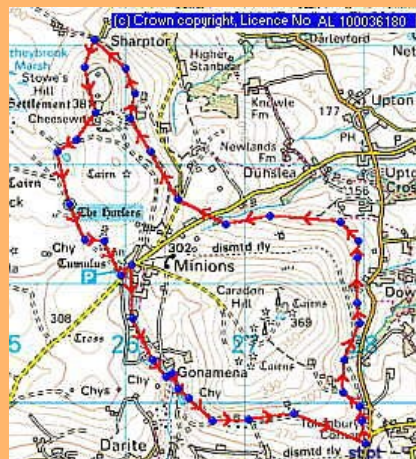
A LOOP (ISH) AROUND CARADON HILL ST PT: TOKENBURY CORNER CAR PARK GRID REF: 280697

The walk around Caradon Hill visits several well known local beauty spots up on Bodmin Moor, amongst them the Cheesewring, the Hurlers, Caradon Hill itself, Jopes Shaft and many other places and disused mines evoking scenes of times past. Not only that, you get to walk through the highest village in Cornwall, Minions, at just under 1000 ft above sea level.

The walk I've described here is of the order of 7 to 8 miles although it can easily be extended by simply going further east from the Cheesewring out to the Sibleybeck reservoir area. This description describes the recce I carried out on Sunday 3rd Nov 02.

The start point is Tokenbury Corner Car Park just up the hill from Pensilva, a village a few miles west of Callington.

One notable feature of this 8 mile walk is that there is virtually no road walking, perhaps 100 yds in all. This commends it to anyone who dislikes road walking as much as I do!!



The outline of the route is shown on the map above. To see the footpaths, tracks and disused railway lines we followed, this outline and the description should be related to a 1:25000 map of the area. The Ordnance Survey map Explorer 109 map of Bodmin Moor is the most suitable one that I've found.



We set off from the Tokenbury Corner CP at just about 10.45 AM and headed due north for a short distance until we came to a track heading up to the highest hotel in Cornwall, nestling under Caradon Hill and the very tall TV transmitter towering above it.

We followed the track up for a short distance north west before swinging north again and passing under the spoil heap of an old mine working.

There are two tracks going round the south east side of Caradon Hill, one main track, quite wide, hard underfoot and very obvious. Slightly to the east of it, further down the hill is the other narrower and altogether softer, muddier track.



We followed the wider track north for two or three hundred yards and then bore down north east, through bracken, to intercept the lower narrower path.

The 1:25000 OS map shows the higher wider track as a disused railway and the lower one as a dismantled tramway, a fact of significance to enthusiasts of railways and tramways but not so to me.



As we walked north we could see the country road further below us and to the east and some buildings, perhaps a farm, called Downgate was soon behind as we followed the track round.

The track gradually swung north west as it passes close to cultivated fields just off to the right. After about a mile or so the path converged with a footpath

sign and we were on a public right of way with it's clearer signs.

The next mile was quite well signposted and we simply walked along the footpath heading almost due west and undulating as it followed the contours of the ground, but generally quite level going.

At one point we could see a stone boundary marker or some such thing but with no markings on it then I had no way of knowing what it was.

We passed a couple of brooks en route and even over one small clapper bridge.



Just ahead of us beyond the clapper was a house, and the signs directed us to the right of the house, through the gate seen in the right hand side of the photograph.



Once through the gate we walked up a short slope with old wooden steps which were not in a particularly good state of the repair.

At the top of the short climb we emerged over a stile onto a country road for the first of two sections of road walking, but for less than 50 m.

We turned left and walked along the road to the next footpath sign. This directed us north west across 3

fields and a similar number of stiles and out to cross a second narrow country road and make our way onto Bodmin Moor again.

Once across the narrow road, we found a narrow path heading still north west up through bracken for a short distance with farm buildings off to our right.

After this short uphill section, we came to another disused rail line heading north along relatively level ground.



We had about a mile to go to reach the Cheesewring beauty spot at the top of a large long disused quarry. We followed the track, characterised by the small flatstones which supported the metal railway lines that were once there.

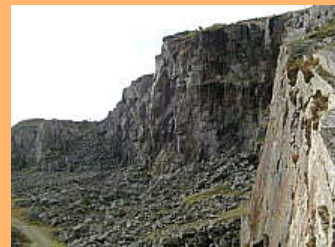


There were brilliant views off to the east and across a valley we could see well preserved mine buildings.

It was easy walking along the track as it swung north west and ahead of us we could see the huge quarry and the Cheesewring rocks atop it.

As we approached the quarry we could see a track heading up just before the quarry and the very large rock spoil heaps ahead.

Although we could have taken this route for the shortest distance ascent to the Cheesewring, we continued along the track passing by the huge heaps of rocks and then turned sharp left to climb up the steepest part of the hill through bracken and clitter up to the Tor and Cheesewring stones at the top.



This was a steep climb but it did give excellent views of the quarry workings and it is easy to visualise the quarry men toiling away in the area, moving immense quantities of stones.

After quite an ascent, with a few stops to enjoy the views, we got to the top and were immediately battered by a 30 to 40 mph gale which was blowing.



Following the recce I've decided to modified the route and the route I have shown on the map is the one I'll take when I actually lead a group round the route in 2003.

I plan to follow the track on north and approach the climb from the North of the Cheesewring were the route up is much less strenuous up to the top of Stowe's Hill and the Cheesewring itself.

This strange grouping of stones, comprising the Cheesewring, is obviously very stable and it's shape must have been the result of millenia of natural erosion.

As can be seen from the photograph above, it is a particularly fine example of a stone cheesewring.

We huddled beneath the cheesewring rocks to have lunch, while trying to avoid the penetrating gale blowing all round us.

After lunch, we descended, picking our way down through rocks, to lower, flatter and far less windy terrain and headed south across easy walking over typical Bodmin Moor short grassland for under a mile until we reached the next well known local beauty spot.



These are groups of standing stones known as the Hurlers, large renovated stone circles, of great significance and beauty with two or is it three stone circles.

This walk can be easily extended in this area. If you want a 9/10 or 12 mile walk simply head more north west from the Cheesewring and head towards Sibleyback reservoir heading to Tregarrick Tor above the reservoir.

For those with time on their hands there is a path down from the Tor to the reservoir and a good track all the way around the water.



From Tregarrick Tor there is an easy route with clear tracks due east back to the Hurlers and then onto to the car park just on the edge of Minions village.

Returning to the route we were covering on the recce. Having enjoyed looking at the Hurler Stone Circles we continued south and towards the village of Minions.

When you reach the car park on the outskirts of Minions, turn left and head along the village road between the cottages, for less that 100 metres until you reach the pub to the right , shop ahead and toilets to the left.

Although it is a relatively small village, it has two car parks, shops, a restaurant, the Cheeswring hotel/pub (with an excellent pub sign), a heritage centre and of course the toilet block, the only one to be found on this route.



Just before the Cheesewring Hotel, there is a public footpath sign which directs you south between cottages and then out along a narrow path away from the village.

This path leads you down to the village of Crows Nest but of more significance is the fact it leads you to an abundance of mine working en route, with tremendous archaeological history.



We followed the footpath south out of the village and through a couple of gates. Soon we were walking by a semi derelict building sporting the strange name "Pontoon Piece". Beyond it and over a stone stile the path began to descend towards the mine workings all round us.

There were more large houses and outbuildings off to our left in the area of Gonamena and we were getting closer to the mine workings, they are simply huge and almost eerie, a real reminder of the past.

If you want to find out more about them then click on the link on the Bodmin Moor walks page of this site and you'll be taken to a very interesting and informative site describing these workings and the whole area between Minions and Crows Nest.

We began to descend down and into the deep man made valley passing right under a an old pit trolley placed on a short length of track above the footpath.



Off to our right and high above us was the South Caradon Mine of the biggest copper mines in the world a hundred or more years ago and certainly the largest such mine in Cornwall.

At one point the track was very wet but there were stones to walk along, they appeared quite green so take care when stepping between them or you may get rather wetter than you might like.



Just beyond farm buildings and enclosed land, there was a track heading off east from the main track which continued on down to the village of Crows Nest.

We climbed over a stone stile and descended across a brook, luckily diverted underground through pipes and so easy to cross.

The transition onto the other side of the man made valley was easier than I had imagined and so we were soon up and through spoil tips to more long disused mine workings and chimneys.

We were now right in the middle of what must have been a hive of frantic activity over a century ago.

The views down the carved out valley were really dramatic with high spoil tips above where the copper had been mined all those years ago. It is well worth stopping here just to take in all the views, it is breathtaking in its stark beauty.



Once again the walk could be easily extended by not crossing the brook as we had done but to continue on down on to Crows Nest , turn left walk down the road and then a couple of hundred metres on, turn left again and follow the path up the side of the valley we were now on.

But be warned it is quite a steep climb up again to reach the point we were now at.

We had taken the 'easy' option for once!!



Tracks were very easy to see, in this area, and we followed one south east for a short distance before we swung east with Caradon Hill high above us to the north.

There were more mine workings off to our right and then uphill again for a short distance as we approached some very well preserved mine buildings,

marked on the 1:25000 map as Jope's Shaft.

We wandered round this mine and related spoil heaps before continuing along clear tracks still heading west to more large spoil heaps.

We were now only half a mile from Tokenbury Corner and the car park.

There are lots of tracks in the area and providing you head generally east it doesn't really matter which you take to return for the short distance back to the car park.

It had been an interesting recce and as I've mentioned, the walk can be anything from 7 miles to 12 miles, with extensions easy to add in to suit your own taste.



What did I most enjoy about the walk. Firstly the complete absence of road walking, under 150 metres in total, the range of scenery, secondly the Cheesewring and of course the masses of mine workings we walked round.

If you decide to try it, the perambulation of Caradon Hill is easy if visibility is good, just keep the mast on your left and you'll do an anticlockwise loop round the hill, on your right and you'll go clockwise round it. But don't miss out on Bodmin Moor, the Hurlers and the Cheesewring to the north of Minions, it is well worth going the extra mile or two!!