

Discover the

Dartmoor Story

Hisley Heritage Walk

Distance: 5 km

Times: 2½ hours

Circular walk

Info: There are side routes for the adventurous historians or more inquisitive woodland explorers.



Moor than meets the eye
Landscape Partnership



www.dartmoorstory.org

Forged by nature; shaped by time and human hands.

The story of medieval farmsteads and ancient tracks in the Bovey Valley

People have lived and worked in Dartmoor for thousands of years. Evidence of this part of the Dartmoor Story can be seen on the ground today if you know where to look. The East Dartmoor National Nature Reserve and Bovey Valley holds many clues and can tell many stories of our ancestors' lives in the area.

This walk through Hisley Wood takes you to Boveycombe farmstead and along the Old Manaton Road which, prior to the current road network, provided the only link between Bovey Tracey and Manaton. It guides you across a stone pack horse bridge, follows ancient tracks and passes old farms and buildings.

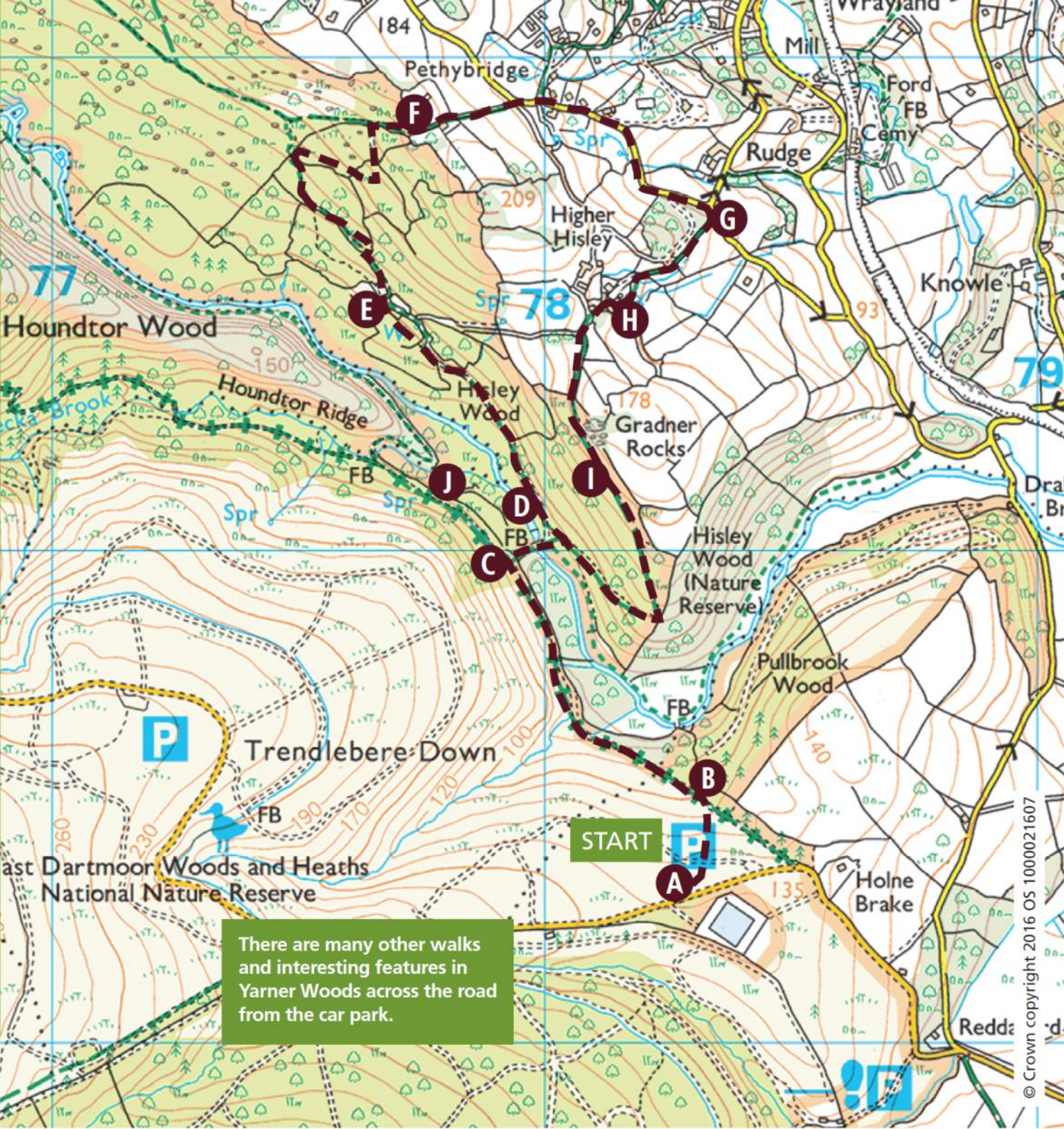


An old postcard view along the Old Manaton Road in the Bovey Valley. Compare the skyline with the view today.

The Route

The walk starts at the car park on the edge of Trendlebere Down and takes you along a series of ancient tracks, examining the heritage of the area along the way. The route climbs gently through woodland, providing dramatic views before a steady descent back to an old bridge, returning to the starting point.

Allow 2 ½ hours for the whole route which is 5 km in total but there are side routes for the adventurous historians or more inquisitive woodland explorers.



There are many other walks and interesting features in Yarners Woods across the road from the car park.

Directions

Starting from the car park **A** at the edge of Trendlebere Down (SX782792) make your way down a small unsurfaced path to the track known as the Old Manaton Road **B**. Walk down the hill to a giant boulder where a finger post points your way into the woods and over the pack horse bridge **C**.

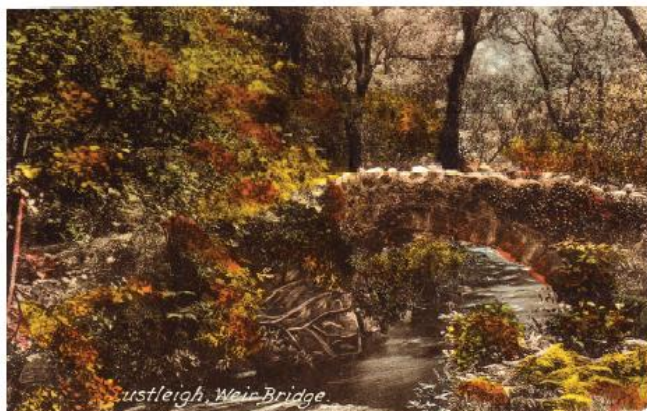


pudding Stone

After crossing the bridge, stop for a while to look at the river. Compare the old postcard from 1929 with the view you have looking upstream. The old weir is actually marked on maps from over a century ago (1905 map) and was probably built to create a fishing pool. If you look closely you may be able to see a remnant of the old weir.



Postcard picture from 1929 of the weir near Hisley Bridge



Hisley Pack-horse Bridge. The bridge itself has been used for many years to link Manaton and Lustleigh to the farms of the area. It is shown on the OS map of 1905 but is likely to be much older.

Leaving the river you start to climb the old track **D** through the trees, following the sign to Pethybridge. You need to keep your eyes wide open at this point, looking for the remains of the Boveycombe farmstead **E**.

After a few minutes of walking (approximately ½ km) you will start to see signs of old walls and boulders, many of them covered with ferns, moss and ivy. You are now entering a farmstead that was originally built by medieval farmers in the early 14th century and has been in use for many years until it was deserted in the early 20th century.





Heaven's Gate

After looking around the farmstead continue your walk up the track, following signs to Heaven's Gate and Pethybridge. At the top of Hisley Wood turn right at the gate and cross a small boulder strewn meadow. This is part of Lustleigh Cleave and the variety of lichen in this area makes parts of the valley a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Enjoy the pure air here then walk through Heaven's Gate **F**. This takes you along another ancient track which is enclosed on both sides with stone walls. At the end of the track turn right along the road for around ½ km (5 mins) until you see the sign for Lower Hisley on the right **G**. Follow this farm track, keeping left along the signed route around the edge of the garden and pass through the old farmyard.



As you pass the old farm buildings you may notice a small granite building with a conical roof **H**. This fascinating structure was built as an ash house; a safe repository for hot wood ash from domestic fires, to avoid sparks from embers setting thatched roofs alight. It also kept ash dry before being used on arable fields as potash. Few ash houses are known outside Dartmoor and most are in the SE corner of the moor.

From Lower Hisley, follow the path back into the top of Hisley Wood, enjoying the extensive views up the Bovey Valley on the way. As you descend slowly along the woodland track, take a look at the hazel coppice to your right **I**.

This is an established hazel coppice that provides a good habitat for many wild creatures including the endangered dormouse. The Woodland Trust will continue to manage this valuable habitat by gradually removing the plantation conifers and cutting the coppice in cycles to maintain the optimum wildlife habitat.

As you walk further down the track admire the view across the Bovey Valley to Yarner Wood and Trendlebere Down. Stay here for a while and enjoy the view, but

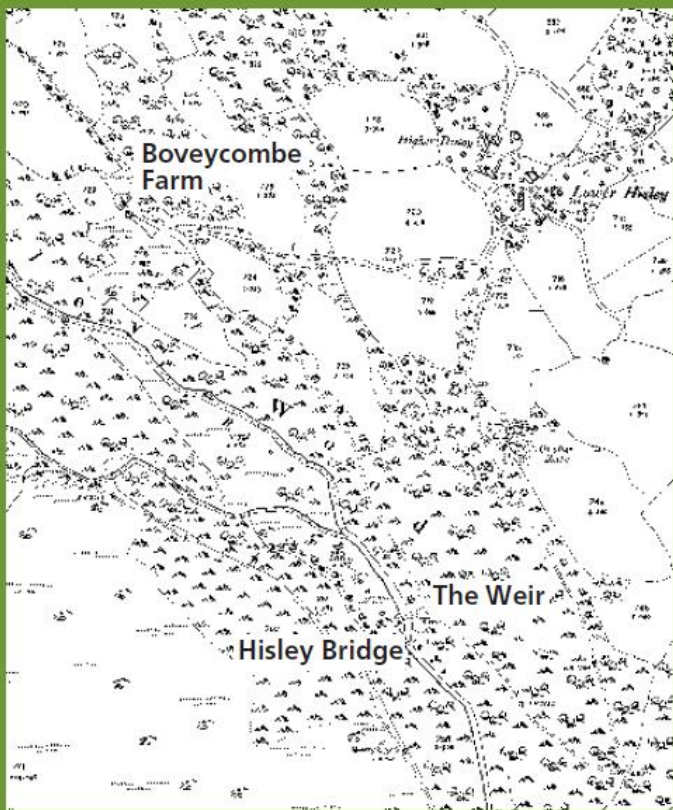
also notice the younger hazel coppice in front of you. Successional cutting and regrowth of hazel like this will maintain the habitat for the dormice and other precious woodland wildlife.

Carry on your walk down the hill until you come back to the pack horse bridge you crossed earlier **C**. If you have the time (perhaps 20 minutes) you could try to find the last remnants of another medieval farmstead in the valley **J**. Along the western bank of the river you can find a small unsurfaced path that takes you into the wood on the riverside. Look carefully for the old walls and buildings of Vinnamore.



Vinnimore Farm

Vinnimore is another medieval farmstead that has long since been abandoned. A lot less is known about these remains but they are still visible, and you can search for them if you are feeling adventurous. Whether or not you decide to go to Vinnimore you can complete the walk by retracing your steps along the Old Manaton Road to the car park near the road.



The OS map from 1905 clearly shows the Boveycombe Farm and surrounding area. Notice how the fields and enclosures around the farm were less wooded then.

The History Hunters is a group of Natural England volunteers who have done a lot of research in this area and have used LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging is a method of using aircraft mounted lasers to map the ground surface) to locate many of the boundaries and tracks you can see on the old maps.

Compare what you can see on the ground today with the old map above from 1905. There are three farm buildings and a number of field enclosures visible on the map. Why not have a look around to see how much of the old buildings still remain?



For further information on local heritage, or if you would like to get involved with helping to save our woodlands, please contact:

Woodland Trust

0330 333 3300

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

The Woodland Trust is a registered charity, numbers 294344 and SC038885.

Dartmoor National Park Authority

01626 832093

hq@dartmoor.gov.uk

Natural England

0845 600 3078

enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

Moor than meets the eye

Landscape Partnership



LOTTERY FUNDED

www.dartmoorstory.org

Forged by nature; shaped by time and human hands.