

Discover the

Dartmoor Story

Walking in and around Widecombe-in-the Moor



DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK

Dartmoor is the largest open space in southern England, containing evidence of our cultural heritage from prehistory up to the present day. It has habitats sustaining a great diversity of species including very rare plants and animals, lichens, butterflies and other insects. There are also many birds of moors, heath and farmland to be found here.

Dartmoor was one of the first National Parks to be designated in Britain, in 1951. Please help us to look after it.

- Leave gates as you find them
- Keep your dog under effective control and clean up after it
- Only camp where legally permitted
- Do not light fires
- Dispose of all litter responsibly – find a bin or take it home

For more information call into a National Park Visitor Centre - they can be found at Princetown, Postbridge and Haytor - or visit www.dartmoor.gov.uk

For their assistance in the compilation of this booklet thanks go to David Ashman, Peter and Aileen Carrett and Widecombe History Group.

The Story of Widecombe is told on panels throughout the village and financed by Moor than meets the eye and the Heritage Lottery Fund. For additional information visit www.dartmoorstory.org

Photographs: except where marked, David Ashman, Peter and Aileen Carrett, Widecombe History Group, Andrew Bailey and Platform One.
Booklet designed and produced by Platform One, www.platform-one.co.uk

NOTES FOR WALKERS

- Refer to a good map: Ordnance Survey map OL28 is highly recommended.
- Before setting out check the weather for Dartmoor National Park.
- After heavy rain some routes can be slippery so do take care and stick to well-trodden paths.
- In winter, plan your activity carefully, allowing for the number of daylight hours so that you are off the moors in good time.
- If appropriate, leave details of your route, destination and estimated time of arrival with a responsible person. Don't forget to report your return.
- Choose walks suited to your abilities or the ability of group members, which can be changed if the weather worsens.
- Allow extra time for rests, stops for food and drink and enjoying the views!

BE PREPARED FOR THE WEATHER

- Wear layers of clothing as these provide better insulation and can be adjusted to suit the terrain and changeable weather conditions.
- Waterproof coat and over trousers, hat and gloves.
- Sturdy walking boots.
- Comfortable rucksack.
- Map and compass.
- Food, water and a warm drink.
- Additional high energy snacks and emergency rations.
- Whistle and a torch during winter.
- First aid kit
- Mist is a frequent hazard on Dartmoor, so know at all times exactly where you are. If the weather deteriorates don't hesitate to turn back.
- Use stiles and gates to cross boundaries - do not climb walls or fences.

Walking in and around Widecombe

Accompanied by a short history of the area and its attractions

	Page
Introduction	4
From Shanks' Pony to Charabanc	4
WALK 1 Wag's Village Walk	6
WALK 2 Walking the lanes around Widecombe	12
WALK 3 Tracks through Time	18
Age of the Motor	24
WALK 4 Moor Medieval	26
WALK 5 Two Crosses to Grimspound	28
WALK 6 Buckland Beacon	31
WALK 7 Heights of the Bronze Age	34



A view of Widecombe

INTRODUCTION

Widecombe is ideally suited to explore Dartmoor and some of the best spots on the moor can be found nearby. This booklet suggests some walks and places to visit to help you see some of the Dartmoor Story for yourself.

People have lived and worked on Dartmoor for over 4,000 years and each generation has left their mark in some way. Bronze Age settlers first farmed the moor, followed by medieval communities which sprung up in more prosperous times. In particular, tinners left abundant evidence of their mining by opencast methods, forming deep linear gullies known as beamworks.

Life in a rural community like Widecombe would have been hard. The only way to get around was on foot or horseback. Tracks were so rough that farmers used horses to drag heavy loads rather than use carts.



The road into Widecombe, looking towards Manor Cottages

FROM SHANKS' PONY TO CHARABANC

Traditionally the main way for people to get around Dartmoor's wild terrain was by Shanks' pony (on foot!) Many people would have to cover several miles on a daily basis to walk to school, to work and to church. One of the tracks over Hameldown which is still in use today is known as the Church Way and was used by people from around the parish to get to St Pancras Church.

It was only the well-off who walked for recreation and to 'take the air'. In the late 18th and 19th centuries artists and these refined travellers began to explore Dartmoor.

In the 19th century, improvements in roads and the coming of the railways allowed more people to get out and to enjoy the countryside. Coastal towns like Paignton and Torquay became fashionable resorts earning the nickname 'The English Riviera'. As this fledgling tourist industry developed, hoteliers looked to Dartmoor as a

destination for interesting day trips by charabanc.

The word charabanc (pronounced in English as sharrabanc) comes from the French char à banc – a carriage with wooden benches.

They became so popular that on one single day in September 1891, Mr Joll of Bovey Tracey employed all his available horse-drawn vehicles to convey 115 people on a 'Dartmoor Experience.' The charabancs were open to the elements and not very comfortable; the roads around the Moor, were narrow and uneven so the 'experience' may often have been wet, windy and pretty bumpy but this did not deter the intrepid traveller.



A reenactment of Uncle Tom Cobley an' All

The famous song about Uncle Tom Cobley and his friends travelling to Widecombe Fair helped make the village a favourite destination and to meet demand several cafés were opened. Moorland Café, now the Café on the Green, is thought to have been one of the first in Devon to offer cream teas.

Widecombe remains popular with visitors and is a great centre for a number of walks detailed in the following pages.

You can start with a leisurely stroll around the village and progress to more ambitious routes.

The first of these was a favourite of Anthony 'Tony' Beard who was passionate about his native county and an authority on its folklore, wildlife and topography.

A charabanc outside The Old Inn



WALK 1 | Wag's Village Walk



Crown copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100024842

DISTANCE: 1 mile/1.6km **TIME:** 1 hour **DIFFICULTY:** Gentle stroll, two steep gradients.

TERRAIN: Well surfaced countryside lanes and water meadow.

HIGHLIGHTS: Walk through medieval Widecombe.

THE WIDECOMBE WAG



This short walk leads you around the village in the footsteps of the Wag from Widecombe - Anthony Beard. He regularly took visitors on guided walks, providing them with a feast of facts and anecdotes, all spiced with his inimitable humour and warmth. His gift as a storyteller helped thousands of people to appreciate the moor.

Anthony was born and bred in Widecombe and held a deep love for Dartmoor and its traditions. He was a dairy farmer and milkman, delivering 400 pints of milk a day, but across the West Country he was better known for his writing and broadcasting as the 'Wag from Widecombe'.



1. A WINNING SIGN

Start at the Village Sign on the small green next to the church. The original sign was put up in 1920 thanks to a national competition launched by the Daily Mail. It was the first village sign in the whole of Devonshire. The Widecombe sign was taken down during the Second World War, on government orders, to confuse the enemy if Britain was invaded. When it was removed the ceramic tiles that decorated it were damaged beyond repair. It was replaced by the sign you see today, which depicts Uncle Tom Copley an' All and was designed in 1948 by Lady Sylvia Sayer, who was a keen Dartmoor conservationist.

2. HOLE IN THE WALL

Leaving the green, take the road towards Haytor, passing the garden of the Wayside Café.

For hundreds of years tin mining was a major industry on Dartmoor, which brought considerable wealth to the area. In the south part of the café wall is part of a tinner's mortar stone. These stones formed the base of the tin miners' stamps, which were used in crushing the ore. Over time, repeated hammering made a depression and the stone was no longer usable, but the miner simply turned it over and used another face. More information about tin mining can be found in St Pancras Church.



Photograph: Jonathan Constant ©

3. WHAT'S IN A NAME?

A little further on, take the footpath on the right, climbing over a stile, which leads into the meadow beside the East Webburn river.

In inclement weather, or when it is muddy underfoot, the following water meadows walk can be avoided and walkers should return to the village sign. In the corner of the church wall, behind the sign, is a 'kissing gate' into the churchyard. The walk can be resumed by proceeding two-thirds of the way along the path to the Parr graves and then re-joining the original route.

Walking through this wet meadow might provide a clue to the origin of the name of the village. It may derive from wide combe (valley) or from withy combe, a wet valley where willows grow.

4. A ROYAL CONNECTION?

At the far end of the meadow, join the lane via another stile and turn right, back towards the village. After about 50 or so yards you will see, on the right, a small flight of granite steps and a gate into a field. The route climbs steeply towards the church, across the field and, veering slightly to the left, takes you into the churchyard via a kissing gate.

Following the path to the right you arrive at two graves: the one on the left is that of Olive Katherine Parr, the Dartmoor authoress known as Beatrice Chase, and that on the right of her mother Katherine. The ladies lived at Venton, a hamlet along the lane past the Rugglestone Inn. They always insisted that they were related to Catherine Parr, the sixth and surviving wife of Henry VIII, but this has never been proven.

5. CATHEDRAL OF THE MOOR

Turning left at the end of the path brings you to the ancient village cross, and the door into 14th century St. Pancras Church, often referred to as 'The Cathedral of the Moor' and dedicated to St Pancras. Take care as you enter since there are steps down to the current floor level, indicating that there was an earlier building on the site that was probably of wooden construction. A ramp is available, if required, for wheelchair access.

At the base of the tower, built during the 16th century, is a stone bearing a carved family crest. Now referred to as 'the Tucker stone', it had been presented by the Tucker family of Natsworthy Manor, just a short distance up the valley, and was originally to be part of a new pulpit. However, the vicar of that time pronounced that the pulpit "should be to the Glory of God, and not to the Tucker family". The stone disappeared for many years until the day that part of the vicarage wall collapsed and at the base was the Tucker stone.

On the wall in the tower, two large boards tell the story of The Great Storm of 1639, which caused extensive damage to the church, the deaths of four people and injury to another sixty who were worshipping at the time. Local legend blamed supernatural intervention but, in reality, this dramatic event was due to the severity of the storm and, possibly, an earthquake that was recorded on the same day in an area known as the Sticklepath Fault.

More information can be found on the display boards in the church or in the church booklet.



Photograph: Susan Andrew ©

Three Hares roof boss



The Tucker Stone



Automaton of Uncle Tom Cobby an' All



Church House and Sexton's Cottage

6. A COMMUNITY HUB

Exiting the Church, turn right and then right again, behind the tower, where it is clear that the 16th century structure is an addition to the 14th century church. The tower covers half of a window and a door that has been sealed up: interestingly, this masonry contains part of a miner's mouldstone.

Retrace your steps to the lychgate and into the square where the plinth of the old village cross can be seen alongside a large yew tree. On the right of the square is the old Church House and Sexton's Cottage, a building that has had a number of uses in its long life. Currently, the National Trust Shop occupies one end, which was once the home of the sexton. The larger part of the building has been a pilgrim's rest, an alehouse, an almshouse, the village school, and is now greatly used as the Village Hall.



The Saxon Well

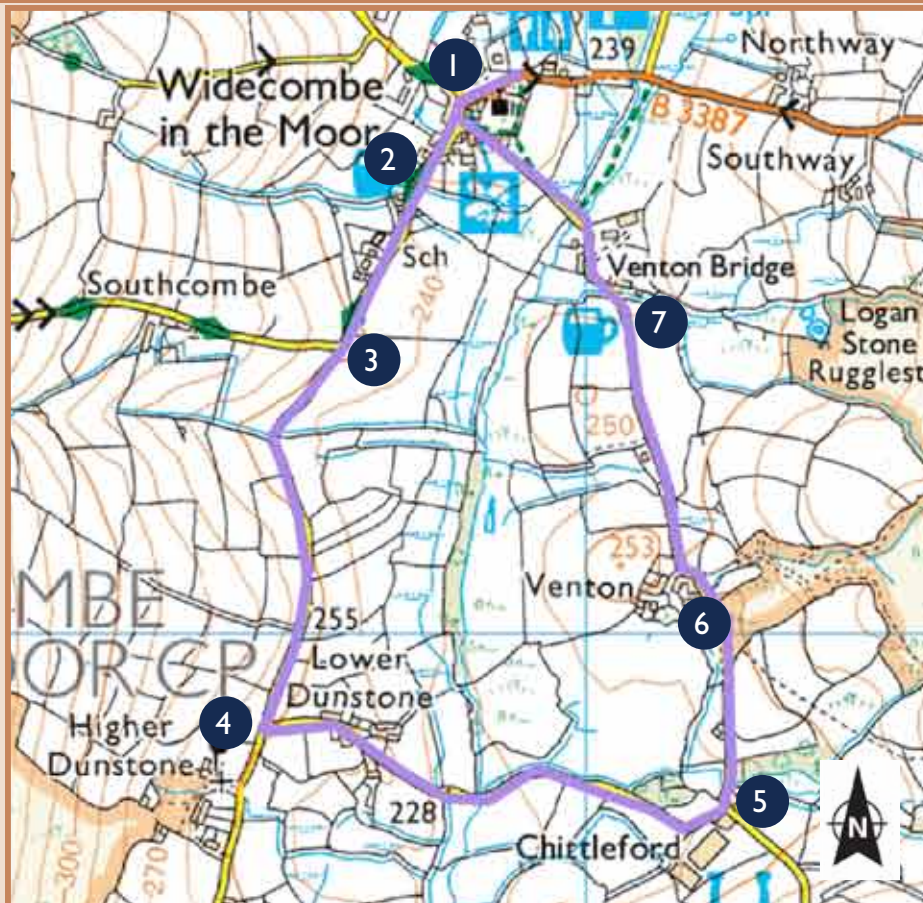
7. SAXON WELL

Now walk down the hill to the left, passing the village forge, and at the bottom on the right is the Saxon Well, one of the original water supplies to the village; it is said that it has never run dry. Adjacent to the well is a cottager's pigs' house. Make your way back up the hill to the Village Green.

The Green itself is known as Butts Park, a reference to the time when the King decreed that all able-bodied men must practice archery every Sunday, so that they could help defend the kingdom if required.



WALK 2 | Walking the lanes around Widecombe



Crown copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100024842

- DISTANCE:** 7 miles/11.5km
- TIME:** 1-1½ hour
- DIFFICULTY:** Gentle stroll, fairly level
- TERRAIN:** All on well-surfaced countryside lanes.

HIGHLIGHTS

Walk through medieval Widecombe visiting Higher Dunstone, Chittleford and Venton with glimpses of the more recent past.

The Widecombe valley was the location for several medieval manors; North Hall around which Widecombe village grew up, Natsworthy and Dunstone. North Hall no longer stands, but has been the site of recent archaeological surveys which have shown it was one of only a handful of moated medieval manor houses in Devon. It was located behind the Café on the Green.

1 ON THE GREEN

Medieval men had to be proficient with the longbow and had to practice archery every Sunday on the green, which still bears the name, Butts Park.



2 STEPEE UPEE

From the Village Green follow the road through the village past the forge and along the valley towards Higher Dunstone and Ponsworthy. Down the hill, if you look over to your left, immediately past the entrance to the Old Rectory there is a mounting block, used by the rector's visitors to remount their horses in more recent times. These blocks were locally known as "stepee upees".

Down the road, on the right, you will come to three cottages formerly known as Southcombe Villas. The centre cottage is where Widecombe's first post office was located, and the building was also used as the local bakery. The postcard picture below illustrates the postman about to enter the post office and dates from 1907.

Please note the three cottages are now private dwellings.



Past the 'post office' on the opposite side of the road is the cottage illustrated in the Robert Burnard photo of 1895 (below). The children in the photo are the photographer's daughter and the son of the miller who lived in the cottage at that time. The cottage no longer has its thatched roof.

Please note this property is a private dwelling.





Farmers placing monies due to the land agent on the Dun Stone

On your right you will pass the Saxon Well and the Pig House. The well was said to be one of the original sources of village water and has never dried out. The Pig House is being restored by the Widecombe History Group to shed light on village history.

A little further on the left is the field where the famous Widecombe Fair is held every year on the second Tuesday of September.

3 MILK STOP

About a hundred yards out of the village on the right, at the bottom of Southcombe Hill, you can see the

stand where 10-gallon milk churns were collected by the dairy company for bottling and distribution.

4 DUNSTONE DEALS

Walk on for about quarter of a mile, turn left and you will reach the hamlet of Dunstone with its medieval manor house, where you will see on a green space a large stone with a relatively flat top. This is the Dun stone, where local farmers came on specific days to pay the land agents the taxes and rents due, the stone acting as the table where the money was placed for checking.



The Saxon Well



Lower Dunstone Manor



The Dun stone

Nearby is Dunstone Cross which, for many years, was located in the vicarage garden wall, before local petition saw it restored to its rightful setting. The restoration work was funded by Miss Mary Hamlyn of Dunstone Manor, whose father generously paid for the new village sign in Widecombe. Dunstone Manor is recorded in the Domesday Book.

5 MEADOWS AND MILLS

Continue down the lane, arriving at Chittleford another medieval farmstead. In a nearby field there was a tin knacking mill and blowing house. There is nothing to be seen today but it lives on in the field names - Mill Meadow and Mill Bushes.



Dunstone Cross



Beatrice Chase's cottage at Venton



6 AUTHOR'S RETREAT

Leaving Chittleford, turn left in the direction of Widecombe. You will soon arrive at the hamlet of Venton, another medieval farmstead mentioned in the assizes of 1249. The name derives from 'farmstead in a marshy spot'. On your way through you will pass, on your left-hand side, the cottage which was the author Beatrice Chase's home in the 1920s and 30s. Please note this cottage is a private residence and not open to the public.

Leaving Venton and walking along the lane towards Widecombe, after about 200 yards you will pass a metal farm gate on your left hand side. If you stop to look you will see a granite gate post located on the left.



Origin of the five-bar gate

Note the 5 holes in the post which, in times past, used to permit five poles to be placed in the holes. They stretched across the field opening to a similar post on the opposite side, thus creating the predecessor of the 'five-bar' gate.

7 INN-FORMATION

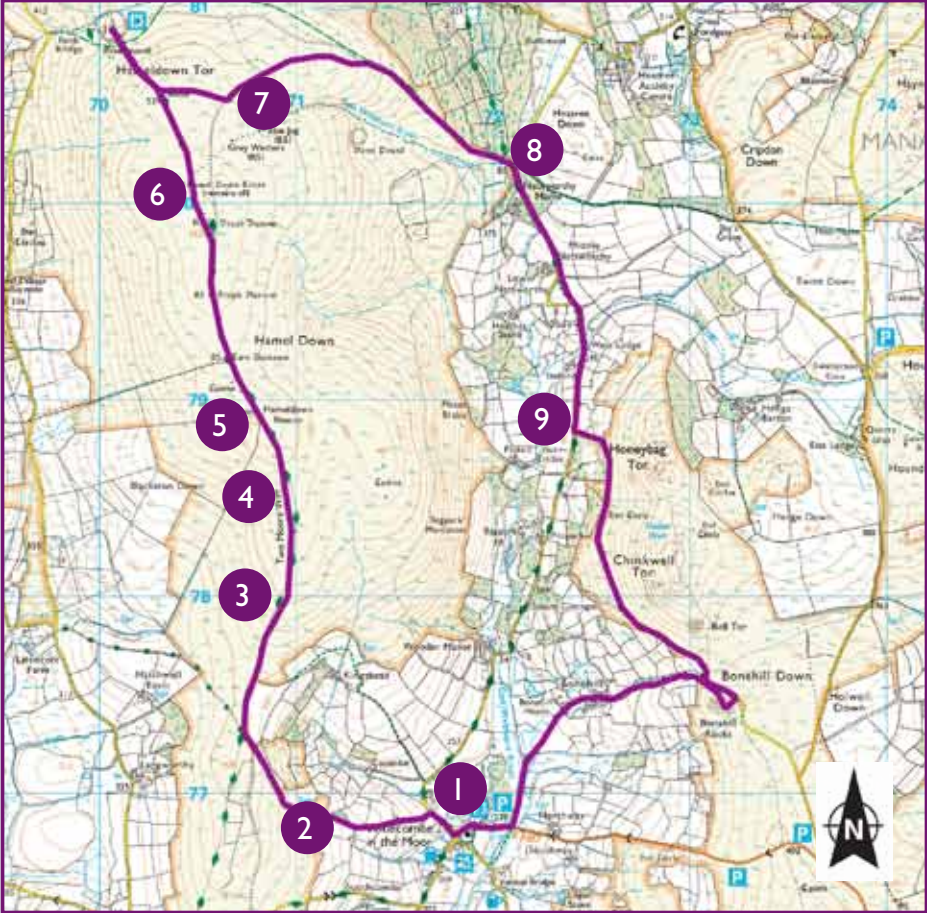
The Rugglestone Inn was originally a farmhouse, built in the eighteenth century, only later becoming a public house. You can find more about its story on the information panels.

Stop here or continue up the lane and back into Widecombe village for a spot of refreshment.

The Rugglestone Inn



WALK 3 | Tracks through Time



Crown copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100024842

DISTANCE: 7miles/11.5km

TIME: approx. 4 hours + breaks.

DIFFICULTY: Moderate.

TERRAIN:

Strenuous climb up onto Hameldown Ridge at start, easy going along ridge, gentle descent on grassy paths, tarmac lane then short climb onto tor before return along tarmac lane.

HIGHLIGHTS

Spectacular views across Dartmoor, Grimspound Bronze Age settlement.

Hameldown to Honeybag



The weather-worn signpost to Hameldown (note the spelling)

This walk takes you back in time to Medieval and Bronze Age Dartmoor. You'll see the remains of abandoned fields, burial mounds where treasure was discovered then lost, an ancient settlement and signs of our more recent wartime history. Climbing up to Honeybag Tor you'll get more spectacular views of Widecombe and the wider moor before returning to the village for well-earned refreshments.

1. MAGNIFICENT VIEWS

From the main car park follow the path to the side of the village green, past the café and the Kiosk car park, onto the lane in the direction of Natsworthy. Directly opposite the tennis courts and children's play area turn left up the track signposted Grimspound via Hameldown. Continue up this steep road for about

half a mile, ignoring the gate to Bowden Barn, and continuing on a rougher track through a gate onto the open moor.

Keep stopping to catch your breath and turn round to enjoy the view of the valley below. This magnificent lane leading up onto the moor would have been used for hundreds of years to take animals to graze. It's also known as Church Way as several outlying settlements would have used it to get to Widecombe Church on a Sunday. Look for a medieval granite gate post in one of the gateways with three sockets carved into it. There would have been a matching post opposite and timber rails slotted into them to make a simple gate.

2. SHAPED BY HUMAN HANDS

Where the path splits, bear to the right, skirting the old drystone wall. The path continues to climb gently, broadening as it picks up the Two Moors Way, following the drystone wall that encloses the fields of the farms. On the corner of the wall the path splits again; continue climbing along the ridge on the left hand path - the right hand path will take you back down to Widecombe via Kingshead Farm!

Ponies grazing on an old tinworking site





Original five-hole gateposts converted to make a modern gateway

Soon you will see the first of several glider poles. These were wooden posts put in across the moor to stop enemy gliders landing during the Second World War. Amazingly, some of these posts still exist, slowly corroding in the harsh elements, leaving wizened and gnarled sculptures.

Glider pole



3. LIVING OFF THE LAND

After a short while the path begins to follow a very straight and more modern wall enclosing fields on your left hand side.

The Victorians enclosed lots of open grazing into 'newtakes', believing with modern methods they could make the moor more productive. Although the amount of land they enclosed was a cause for concern, this practice had been going on for thousands of years. Much of the open moorland you are walking in today could have been enclosed at some time.

During the Bronze Age much of Dartmoor was divided with reaves, a landscape of parallel boundary walls, marking out fields and enclosing settlements, running for several miles in straight lines. Hameldown was at the edge of the Rippon Tor system and also close to the edge of the Dartmeet system.

These different sets of reaves probably represented different communities and could be thought of as equivalent to our modern day parishes. As the soils got poorer these upland fields were abandoned. Then during the medieval period, a thousand years later, the population boomed and people began to move back out across the moor and enclose the land to farm it. When the climate changed again and with the onset of Black Death, people abandoned these fields on the edge to farm the more fertile areas.

Looking back southwards there are plenty of visible ridges to show the outlines of these abandoned fields. Using field walking, aerial photography and modern techniques, such as LIDAR, archaeologists



View across Hameldown

are able to get a good idea of where these fields were. Many fields today have boundaries built on Bronze Age reaves and many have not changed since medieval times.

4. VIEW OUT ACROSS THE MOOR

All along this ridge you get fantastic views of the wider landscape.

Looking out to the west you can see a long white building - this is the Warren House Inn. In front of it is a scarred landscape which has been caused by tanners washing out the land to remove the deposits of tin. The closest plantation is Soussons and in the distance you can see the top of Fernworthy Forest. These plantations are a more recent change to the way we use the land and were planted by the Forestry Commission in 1930.

5. COMMEMORATING THE DEAD

On the edge of the wall is the first of several cairns or barrows along the ridge, which were made by people in Bronze Age times to commemorate their dead. The hollowed-out dip in the top of them is a result of antiquarians and

earlier people looking for treasure. To add further insult boundary stones have been dug into them. These were used to define the boundary of the Duke of Somerset's land and were carved in 1854.

Cairn and Trigpoint on Hameldown Tor





Walking further along you will see several more barrows labelled with the Duke's boundary markers - Two Barrows, Single Barrow and Broad Barrow. Two Barrows yielded one of the most remarkable archaeological artefacts ever to be found on Dartmoor - the Hameldown dagger.

The Bronze Age dagger was discovered in 1872 during the excavation of the burial cairn by Plymouth antiquarian and dentist, Charles Spence Bate. The use of amber for the pommel indicates that there was some form of communication and perhaps trading beyond Dartmoor. The high degree of craftsmanship involved in the making of the pommel, coupled with the prominent location of Two Barrows, suggests that this was the burial of someone of high rank.

The dagger was destroyed in 1942, during an air raid on Plymouth. The photo is of a replica currently on display at Princetown Visitor Centre.

6. CROSSES AND CAIRNS

Continuing with the walk you may want to make a quick detour to your left to look at Hameldown Cross before heading to the end of the ridge. This medieval cross has been heavily eroded over time and has also been used to mark the Duke's boundary with his initials cut into it.



Medieval Cross

At the end of the ridge you are met by a modern cairn - an Ordnance Survey trig point.

Down below is the Bronze Age settlement of Grimspound, a community of twenty-four hut circles sited in an enclosure. This site was first excavated in 1894 by the Dartmoor Exploration Committee who laid the foundations

Hameldown to Honeybag

for modern archaeological studies on Dartmoor. If you have time, and the energy, then head down the hill to visit this fascinating place where some of our first farming ancestors lived.

7. A FATAL CRASH

From the trig point follow the track which runs off in an easterly direction. This path slowly curves to the right and in a short while joins up with a major grassy track.



There were several aircraft crashes on Dartmoor during the Second World War. They were quickly cleared away and little remains to tell people their stories. This commemorative stone marks the tragic loss of four young men when their Hampden bomber crashed on their way back to base after a bombing raid in France. It was erected by the pilot's mother.

8. ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Continue down the track, crossing over the little stream, and leave the moor at Natsworthy Gate. Turning right, the walk now continues back along the road to Widecombe.

As you walk along this valley there are glimpses of some of the old farmsteads that worked the area. Most have medieval origins and have been farmed for hundreds of years. Many of the farmhouses would have started out as simple Dartmoor longhouses, with accommodation at one end and a shippon for the animals at the other. As they became more prosperous changes were made, with many undergoing major works during the Victorian period.

9. HONEYBAG OR HOME?

Crossing over the cattle grid you can shorten the walk by continuing along the road back to Widecombe or you can continue the walk by taking the path to your left towards Honey Bag Tor, taking in spectacular views of the valley. The path climbs gently up a rough stone track, quickly levelling out onto a broad path, following the contour below the tor.

As you enjoy the views the path leads you towards Bonehill Rocks, where it meets the road.

Follow the road downhill through the charming hamlet of Bonehill. At the T-junction, turn right over the East Webburn river and back into Widecombe village.





New, improved and more comfortable tours of the Moor

Age of the Motor

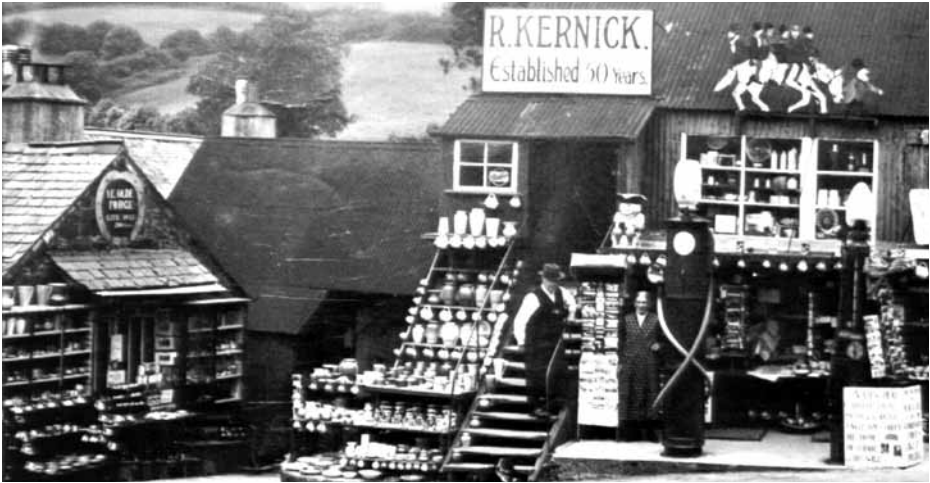
The draughty, open-top, horse-drawn charabancs were replaced by shiny new 'cars', which soon became the preferred means of travel. Trips into the countryside were offered as group excursions, led by smartly-dressed chauffeurs.

But in 1931, the first £100 car – the Morris Minor – rolled off the assembly line, quickly followed by the Austin 7 tourer, priced at £125, and driving ceased to be a privilege available only for the well-to-do. Whole families could now afford to go on outings, stop at leisure and explore.

Once again, enterprising businessmen took advantage of the growing market.

North Hall Café and Moorland Café became popular stopping off places in Widecombe and several shops opened, offering gifts and souvenirs. Mr Kernick, the village blacksmith, began selling a wide range of products, from postcards to Toby jugs.





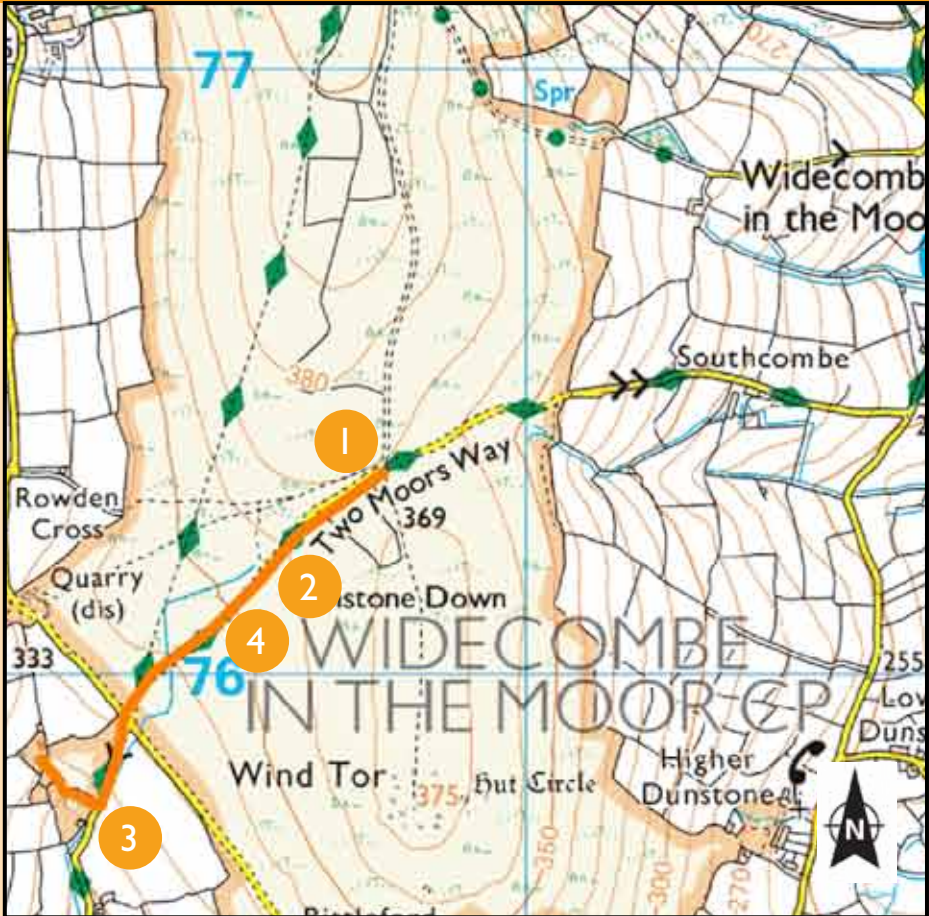
Mr Kernick's shop



North Hall Café



Moorland Café



Crown copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100024842

DISTANCE: 1¼ miles/2km

TIME: approx. 45 minutes + breaks.

DIFFICULTY: Gentle stroll downhill to Hutholes before walking back up the hill.

TERRAIN: All on well-surfaced countryside lanes.

HIGHLIGHTS

Enjoy magnificent views across the moor. Walk through the medieval Dartmoor countryside, alongside abandoned fields, to the deserted settlement of Hutholes.



Medieval Hutholes

Climate improvement and a population boom during the early medieval period, led to people spreading out from the lower land to farm the land higher up on the moor. Then, in the 1300s, the Black Death and a declining climate forced people to abandon these settlements and fields and return to the better land below.

1 TWO CROSSES

Start at Two Crosses Car Park (Grid reference SX707763) which is on Southcombe Hill. From the car park head in a south westerly direction down the hill, along the lane.

2 ABANDONED FIELDS

Looking at the moorland on your left hand side you will see low walls which have grassed over and form the boundaries of long-abandoned medieval fields.

3 A MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT

Continue along to the crossroads and carry on downhill. After about 100 yards take the gateway on the right, which takes you along a wooded track into the Hutholes site. This medieval settlement consists of six buildings - the ruins of three Dartmoor longhouses, barns and a corn drying kiln. A longhouse is a rectangular building in which the animals are kept at one end and the people live at the other. There are still many longhouses intact on the moor but many of them have been converted.

4 SIGNS OF THE PLOUGH

When you have finished walking around the ruins, retrace your steps back up the hill to the car park. You may be able to see a corrugated pattern to the fields on your right as you walk up the hill. This is the ridge and furrow pattern made by medieval farmers as they ploughed the land.

Nearby

Higher Uppacott, a good example of an unconverted restored longhouse, open to the public, is near Poundsgate. This building is managed by Dartmoor National Park Authority. For more information visit www.dartmoor.gov.uk and search for Higher Uppacott.

Challacombe valley terraced strip fields.

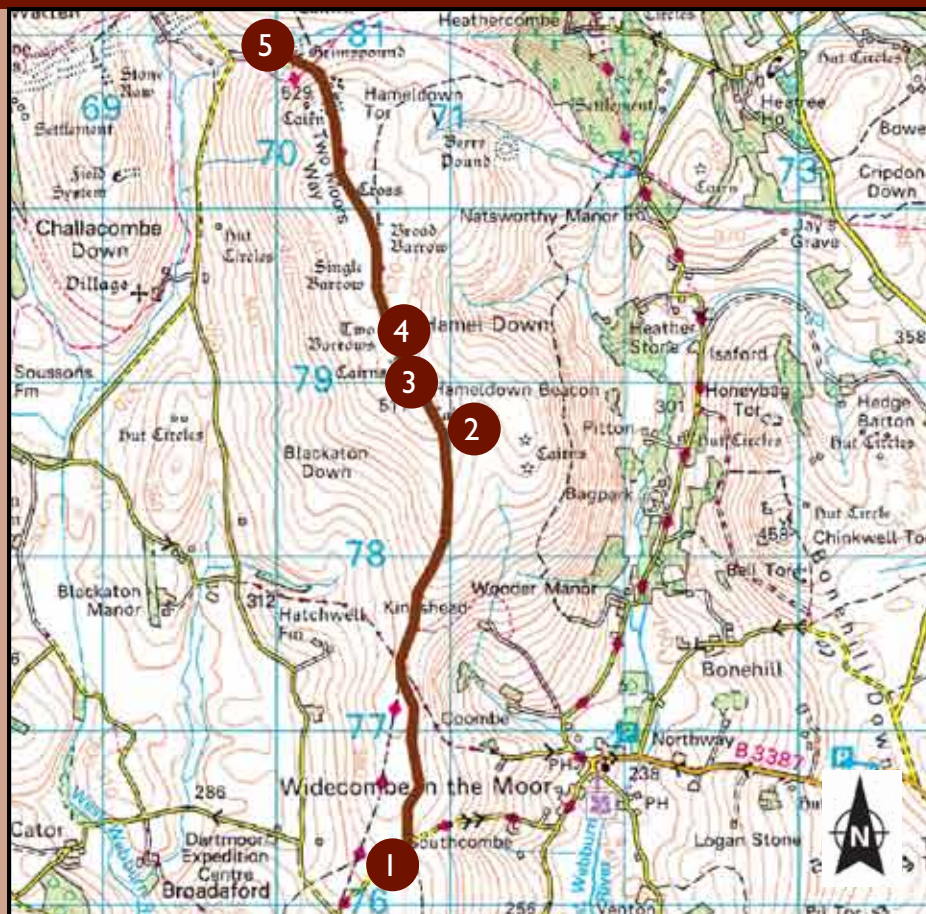
If you want to venture a bit further afield, drive up the Challacombe valley towards Postbridge to see impressive medieval fields terraced into the steep hillsides. These are called strip lynchets and have been formed by medieval farmers ploughing across the slope. Over time, terraces have been created. The best time to see them is when the sun is low, causing shadows along them. To get there from Two Crosses Car Park drive down the lane in a south westerly direction then turn right at the crossroads and travel up the valley for about three miles.

Hound Tor deserted medieval village.

Also well worth a look is the Hound Tor medieval village (Grid reference SX746787). The car park (Grid reference SX739792) is 3 miles from Widecombe with a short ½ mile walk to the village. The site is managed by Dartmoor National Park Authority for English Heritage. Visit www.english-heritage.org.uk and search for Hound Tor.

WALK 5

(Follows the easier parts of route 3 for those who want a less strenuous walk).



Crown copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100024842

DISTANCE: 6 miles/9.6km (there and back)

TIME: approx. 2½ hours

DIFFICULTY: Easy-going walk across Hameldown Ridge. Optional short, steep descent to Grimspound.

TERRAIN: Moorland walk along Hameldown Ridge. Rough grass, mud and boggy parts.

HIGHLIGHTS

Walk through medieval Dartmoor alongside abandoned fields, old tin workings, prehistoric burial mounds and visit Grimspound, a Bronze Age settlement.

Two Crosses to Grimspound



Two Crosses Car Park marker

1 TWO CROSSES

Start at Two Crosses Car Park (Grid reference SX707763) which is on Southcombe Hill. Follow the main track northwards, keeping to the higher ground. To your left you may be able to pick out medieval field boundaries amongst the gorse and heather. These low walls mark the remains of abandoned fields. Continue along until you meet the track coming up from Widecombe village. Continue onwards, ignoring a path which forks off to the left, and follow the wall on your right. This boundary would have kept animals grazing on the common from entering the farmed fields below. At the end of the wall follow the left-hand path towards the summit of Hameldown Beacon.

2 GLIDER POLES

Soon you will see the first of several glider poles. These were wooden posts put in across the moor to stop enemy gliders landing during the Second World War. Amazingly, some of these posts still exist, slowly corroding in the harsh elements leaving wizened and gnarled sculptures.

After a short while the path begins to follow a very straight and more modern wall enclosing fields on your left-hand side. Continue along its length.

3 VIEW ACROSS THE MOOR

All along this ridge you get fantastic views of the wider landscape.

Looking out to the west you can see a long white building - this is the Warren House Inn. In front of it is a scarred landscape which has been caused by tanners washing out the land to remove the deposits of tin. The closest woodland plantation is Soussons and in the distance you can see the top of Fernworthy Forest. These plantations were planted by the Forestry Commission in 1930.

4 COMMEMORATING THE DEAD

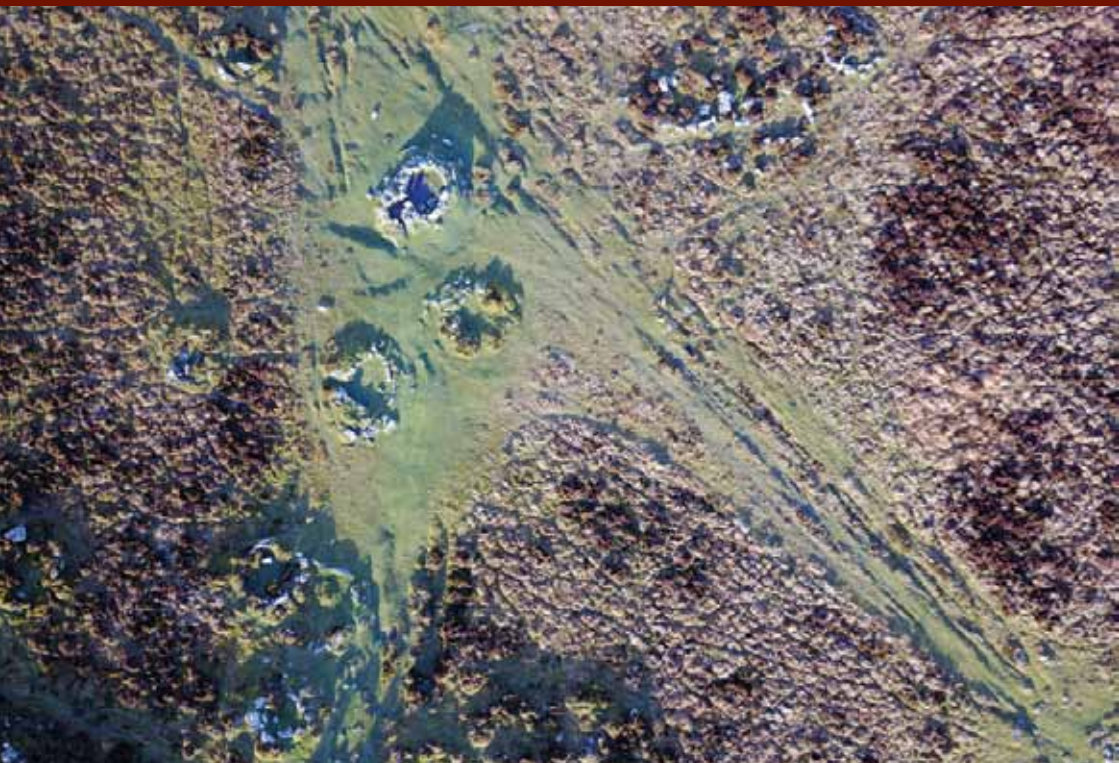
On the edge of the wall is the first of several cairns or barrows along the ridge which were made by people in Bronze Age times to commemorate their dead. The hollowed-out dip in the top of them is a result of excavations by antiquarians and earlier people looking for treasure.

To add further insult, boundary stones have been dug into them. These were used to define the boundary of the Duke of Somerset's land and were carved in 1854.

Walking further along you will see several more barrows labelled with the Duke's boundary Markers - Two Barrows, Single Barrow and Broad Barrow. Two Barrows yielded one of the most remarkable archaeological artefacts ever to be found on Dartmoor. - the Hameldown dagger (see page 22).



The entrance to Grimspound



Grimspound aerial view

5 GRIMSPOUND

Follow the path which forks left to Hameldown Tor and the Ordnance Survey trig point, built alongside a burial cairn. Take the rough track down to Grimspound. From about halfway down you get a good overview of the whole site. Some walkers may wish to turn back here, avoiding the rest of the walk down.

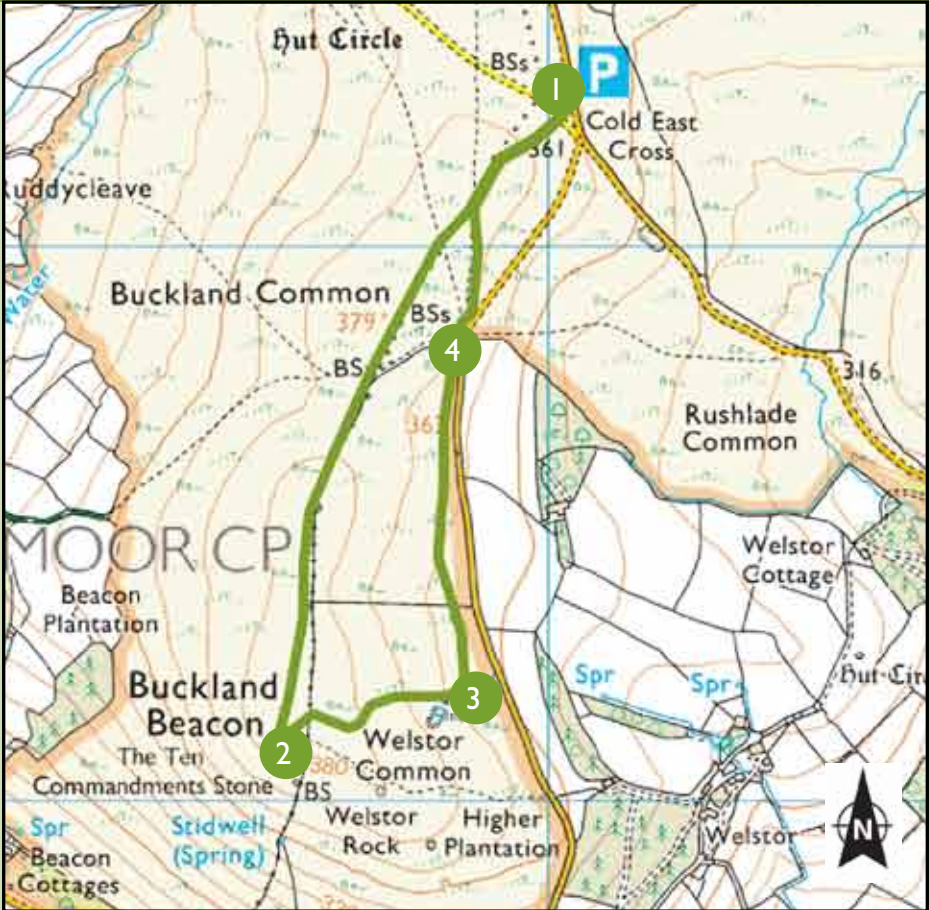
Down below is the Bronze Age settlement of Grimspound. A community of twenty-four hut circles sited in a walled enclosure. This site was first excavated in 1894 by the Dartmoor Exploration Committee, who laid the foundations for modern archaeological studies on Dartmoor.

From here retrace your steps back along the ridge to the car park, enjoying the spectacular views in all directions and especially down into the Widecombe valley.

Grimspound is a scheduled ancient monument and is managed by Dartmoor National Park Authority on behalf of English Heritage. For more information visit their website www.english-heritage.org.uk and search for Grimspound.



WALK 6 | Buckland Beacon



Crown copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100024842

DISTANCE: 2 miles/3.2km

TIME: 1 hour

DIFFICULTY: Easy going walk across Buckland Common.

TERRAIN Moorland walk on grassy paths, muddy and boggy in places. Fairly level.

HIGHLIGHTS

The recently restored Ten Commandments Stones, magnificent views, Bronze Age and medieval fields and a Victorian rifle range.



View from the Beacon

1 COLD EAST CROSS

Start from Cold East Cross Car Park (SX740742). Cross the road and take the grassy track across the common, keeping to the high ground. Continue for just over half a mile until you reach the wall on your left-hand side. This ridge was used for several Bronze Age cairn burials but their remains are difficult to see. The path follows the wall, sticking to the high ground, bringing you to Buckland Beacon and fantastic views across the moors and out to the coast.



Ten Commandments stone

Buckland Beacon was used to signal the arrival of the Spanish Armada in 1588 and has continued to be used for the celebration of historic occasions. Across the common you are looking onto a Bronze Age landscape of farmland, divided up by reaves - long parallel boundaries which marked out the fields. Many still survive today and when the sun is low you may be able to pick some of them out.

2 COMMANDMENTS IN STONE

Just below the Beacon are two slabs of granite which are engraved with the Ten Commandments. These were commissioned by the Lord of Buckland Manor, Mr William Whitely, who wanted to mark the rejection by parliament of the proposed new Common Book of Prayer, in 1928. They recently underwent a programme of restoration as part of the Moor than meets the eye Landscape Partnership scheme.



Part of the old Rifle Butts

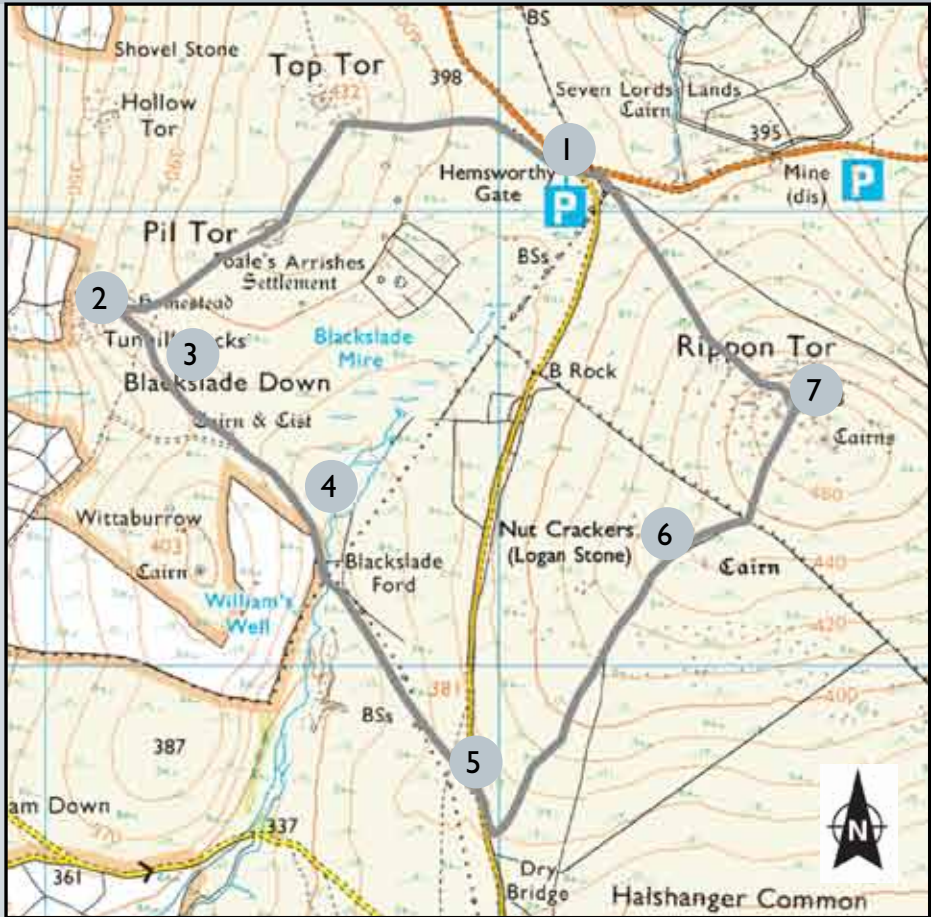
3 ON THE RANGE

From the Beacon, walk back along the wall to the kissing gate and take the wide grassy path down the hill onto Welstor Common. The track comes out onto an open area of grassland by an old quarry and pond. In front are the ruins of a small building which was part of a Victorian rifle range, used by the Ashburton Rifle Volunteers from 1861. The range cuts through medieval strip fields, and crosses over a Bronze Age reave and several medieval earthworks.

4 BACK TO THE CAR

After a short while the path crosses through a gate in the wall, close to the road and a clump of trees. A narrow grassy path in front of you cuts across the moor and leads you to the path you started on and back to the car park.

WALK 7 | Heights of the Bronze Age



Crown copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100024842

DISTANCE: 2 miles/3.2km

TIME: approx. 2 hours

DIFFICULTY: Moderate walk.

TERRAIN:

Moorland walk on grassy paths, muddy and wet in places. Steady climb up to Top Tor, gentle descent then steep climb up to Rippon Tor and steep descent. Stream crossing over Blackslade Water.

HIGHLIGHTS

Fantastic views, Bronze age landscape with settlements, burial cairns and reave boundaries, overlaid with later medieval fields in places.

Explore one of Dartmoor's most important Bronze Age landscapes before reaching the heights of Rippon Tor, with its commanding views of the Teign Estuary.

1 HEMSWORTHY GATE

Start from Hemsworthly Gate Car Park (Grid Reference SX741761). From the car park take the grassy path running parallel to the road, walking uphill to Top Tor. Then follow the path along to Pill Tor through an avenue tor descending gently to Tunhill Rocks.

2 SIGNS OF SETTLEMENT

This route takes you above Foales Arrishes, which is a Bronze Age settlement of eight huts. From a distance it looks rectangular due to later settlers who built additional walls. Arrish is an old English word for stubble or enclosure. At Tunhill Rocks there are fantastic views down to Widecombe below and across the common to Rippon Tor. At the foot of the rocks is a small Bronze Age enclosure with the remains of a hut circle which was excavated by the Dartmoor Exploration Committee in 1896. Tun is a Saxon word for enclosed settlement or farmstead.

From here, follow the grassy path in a south-easterly direction to a well-surfaced farm track, through medieval ridge and furrow fields - the result of ploughing that mounds soil into rounded ridges with a lower furrow either side.

3 LONGHOUSE LOOKOUT

Follow the track with the wall on your right. About two thirds of the way down the wall, look to the left of the track to see the low ruins of a medieval longhouse.

4 CROSSING THE STREAM

Continue to the stream called Blackslade Water and find a safe place to cross it alongside the ford. After a few more minutes the track brings you to the road.

5 GATEWAY TO HILL

Then turn right along the road until you come to a gateway in the wall on the left; cross here onto the common and follow the path uphill.



Rippon Tor Rifle Range

6 AIMING HIGH

Stopping half way up the hill look southwards and you will see a huge brick structure - the Rippon Tor rifle range, built during World War II and closed in 1977. A little further on is the Nutcrackers Logan Stone which could once be rocked. Continue uphill, following the grassy path alongside a wall to the tor. The path cuts across more reaves that divide the Bronze Age landscape.

7 BRONZE AGE CAIRNS

Fantastic views await you at the heights of Rippon Tor, which is crowned with three huge Bronze Age cairns and several smaller ones. These monuments mark significant points in the landscape and may have also been burial mounds. From here you get a great view of Foales Arrishes with its later medieval walls making the rectangular fields. It is now a short steep walk back down the road to the car park.



Looking back up the path to Rippon Tor

You can discover the **WIDECOMBE STORY** at the locations marked with an orange dot and displaying a window sticker.



WIDECOMBE RUBBINGS TRAIL

For younger explorers, there are 7 rubbing posts to find throughout the village. Trail maps are available from the local businesses.



www.dartmoorstory.org

