

**Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> August 2015, Belstone and the Taw Valley with George Norman**

***"Classic Dartmoor Walking"***

This is a walk that takes in the best that Dartmoor has to offer - outstanding scenery, expansive views, challenging walking, ancient archaeology, industrial heritage, classic tors, and this being August, wind and rain!

The forecast was gloomy and as seven walkers and one dog met in the car park at Belstone, we knew the forecasters had got it right. Undeterred, we set off through the village heading south following the river up the valley. The Taw was crossed by the ford, a major test of how waterproof our boots really were as the water level reflected the recent rain.



*huddling on the leeward side*

We followed the track up White Hill, crossing marshy ground, to the White Hill hut circle settlement. This provided a good spot to pause for coffee to admire the Iron Age huts and the wonderful vista over the river valley. We headed on uphill, following the line of Small brook, one of the tributaries of the Taw, over a mix of well trodden path, rough grass and marshy ground. On reaching the summit by Little Hound Tor we came to the Bronze Age White Hill Stone circle. Nearby was the White Moor Stone, believed to be a standing stone associated with the Stone Circle, but more recently used as a boundary marker for three parishes. The initials of each are carved on it, TP for Tawton Parish, T for Throwleigh, and DC for Duchy of Cornwall.



*not quite halfway there at the Stone Circle nr White Moor Stone*

Leaving the circle we headed south toward Hound Tor. High up, on a saddle between two river valleys we were fully exposed to the wind and rain. On a clear day Hound Tor offers stunning views over North and East Devon and the ridge can be seen from Peak Hill. Onwards from Hound Tor, branching South West, another half hours walk across rough ground brought us down to the Steeperton Brook, another tributary of the Tor. After crossing the brook, shelter from the wind and an ideal spot for lunch was found in the well preserved remains of a tinnerns hut.

Onwards south westerly, skirting Steeperton Tor, we passed the remains of the Knack Mine and then turned back north following the Steeperton gorge. The track then took us along the ridge line past Oak Tor, Higher Tor, Irishman's Wall, Belstone Tor, to Belstone common.



*Belstone Tor*

As the weather slowly lifted the whole ridge offered fine views to the East over the Taw river Valley and the West towards the East Okement river, Yes Tor and Higher Willhayes.

This culminated on Belstone common with dramatic views over North Devon across to Exmoor, and on a clearer day, West to Bodmin Moor. The final section of the walk took us down the rock strewn slopes to the Nine Maidens cairn circle.



*communing with one's ancestors at the Nine Stones Cairn Circle*

Then back into Belstone village, with a visit to the church to view the rare ring cross carved into a large slab of Dartmoor granite dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> century. And then of course a warm welcome at the Tors pub, well earned after a wonderful walk in some challenging circumstances with fine company.

**George Norman**

**21 August 2015**