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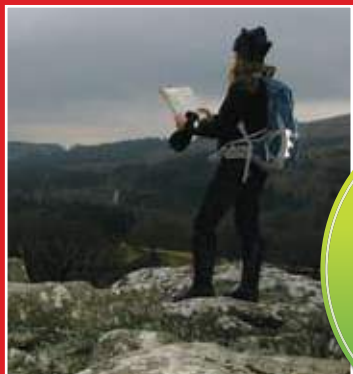
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DARTMOOR

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Active Dartmoor recognises the hazardous nature of Dartmoor and the inherent risks of outdoor activities.

However the magazine and its publishers cannot accept responsibility for the consequences of participating in the activities depicted in this magazine. It is the responsibility of the participant to ensure they are correctly skilled, experienced and equipped to undertake any outdoor adventurous activities.

There is no substitute for instruction by a trained and qualified provider of outdoor activities - Active Dartmoor recommends that participants should seek the professional services from the providers listed in this magazine.

Main cover photograph by Matt Willson
Brennan Townshend February 2012



My bees are getting active. The hum from within the hive has gone up a pitch; a sure sign that winter is receding with nature kick-starting the spring routine of productive work.

Likewise, Edgemoor Publishing and the Dartmoor Partnership have been busy taking Active Dartmoor to the next level. The Active Dartmoor Website for the Partnership is up and running with more events listed than you can shake a walking pole at; the Dartmoor app for the ubiquitous smartphone leads the way nationally as a geolocation device for events, accommodation and places to eat - and the Active Dartmoor week at Easter will be showcasing the potential Dartmoor has for a great adventure.

Meanwhile we've been beaver away preparing hard copy that illustrates some classic spring adventures to be had on the moor - wonderful articles on the extraordinary landscape around us. Mark Stratton takes on a hack in the rain with a hinterland yomp looking for Ted Hughes, Mark Lane continues his bushcraft theme and Becky Mansell soothes the twitch - with her bargain article that demystifies ornithology - Going for a Song.

John

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The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas

NEWS

Hard core improvements



The 11km Granite Way for cyclists and walkers has received some substantial maintenance and improvements. For more information about this popular route go to www.devon.gov.uk/granite_way-2.pdf



Granite & Gears

A new 20km circular mountain bike leaflet has been published by Dartmoor National Park Authority. The idea for the route and leaflet came from working with community youth "champions" as part of a Mosaic social inclusion project.

Andrew Watson, the Senior Access & Recreation Officer for DNPA said: "The youth champions wanted to find ways in which young people can be encouraged to enjoy and explore the National Park, which we were happy to support." The leaflet is available to purchase from the DNPA Information Centres. Also available to buy is the DNPA cyclists map for Dartmoor which shows all routes available to cyclists, with each route individually graded.



FANCY A 140km PERAMBULATION?

Plans for the The Dartmoor Way are progressing under the leadership of Sustrans, who are developing the project along with the necessary fundraising.

For more information please visit:
www.dartmoorway.co.uk/

Landscape rides goes online



The 1 South West off-road cycling project has brought to life the opportunities for cycling with their **interactive online Adventure Cycle Map** <http://map.lsw.org.uk>

Launched in October 2011, the map features detailed information on 'Landscape Rides' in the south west's National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

You can also find 'Trail Hubs' such as Haldon Forest Park near Exeter, and 'Promoted Routes' such as the Granite Way, the latter tend to be longer distance routes. You can use the map to search for local bike shops and hire, cycling clubs in your area, and soon you will be able to search for cycle-friendly accommodation too.

You can find out more about 1 South West and off-road cycling on the website www.lsw.org.uk

Moorland Guides stride out with their open day

Moorland Guides are qualified walk leaders who provide guided walks and support the National Park Authority's educational programme by leading school groups out on the moor.

The National Park Authority will be handing over responsibility for the public guided walks programme to Moorland Guides from 1st April this year and Moorland Guides will be launched on Tuesday 3rd April at Postbridge with a variety of 2 hour walks looking at the Believer antiquities.

Further information can be obtained from their website or by emailing Moorland Guides through the contacts page at www.moorlandguides.co.uk



Cist on Whitehorse

The excavation of Whitehorse Hill cist, by archaeologists working for Dartmoor National Park Authority last August, caused much excitement. The cist excavation revealed a collection of nationally important artefacts including beads, worked leather, textiles and cremated human remains.

Cists are stone built chests used for the burial of cremations or inhumations, and are found across the south west of England. They are rarely found with their original contents. Some 200 cists are known on Dartmoor. They may be sunk into the ground or inserted into barrows or mounds. On Dartmoor the Whitehorse Hill cist is the only known example set within a peat mound.

The cist was first discovered over 10 years ago when one of its side stones fell out of the peat mound which had been concealing it. This was the first excavation of a Dartmoor cist for nearly one hundred years.

The project was jointly funded by the Dartmoor National Park Authority and English Heritage, with contributions from a number of other local funders including the Dartmoor Trust, Dartmoor Preservation Association, Duchy of Cornwall, Devon County Council, Dr Jeremy Butler and Helpful Holidays.

LEAD THE WAY

Many visitors and local people exercise their dog when enjoying Dartmoor. Although a dog may not be actively chasing livestock, its presence can still cause disturbance. The nesting period for many nationally, and regionally, declining species of ground nesting bird such as curlew, lapwing, dunlin, golden plover and skylark, coincides with the lambing season.

The Law requires that dogs be kept under proper control so that they do not disturb or scare farm animals or wildlife but during the moorland lambing and bird nesting season (1 March to 31 July), and lambing season on enclosed farmland (1 December to 30 June), Dartmoor National Park Authority asks that people comply with signs requiring dogs to be kept on a lead.



Dartmoor - an Inspiration for Spielberg

Dartmoor was quoted by Spielberg as being the third main character for his blockbuster *War Horse*, released earlier this year.

The stunning Dartmoor locations used in the making of *War Horse* include:

- The High Plym Country with the private **Ditworth Warren** House SX 584661
- **Ringmoor Down** - SX559668
- **Combestone Tor** and area - SX670718
- **Haytor** - SX759771
- **Bonehill** area - SX732774
- **Hexworthy Bridge** - SX659728
- **Cadover Bridge/Brisworthy** - SX559645



Why not join a guided walk and see for yourself some of the locations used in the film. Visit www.moorlandguides.co.uk for more details.

ALL ABOARD THE HAYTOR HOPPA

Easter Saturday 2012 will see the Haytor Hoppa begin again, with it running every Saturday until 27 October.

The circular, scenic bus route is perfect for exploring Dartmoor and with the service starting at Newton Abbot train station and connections with buses in Bovey Tracey, there are plenty of opportunities for leaving the car at home.

So hop off the bus and enjoy free, circular, linear and audio walks linked to the bus route (downloadable from the National Park website), pick up a Haytor Hoppa Treasure Trail pack. The Hoppa evening excursions will also be running in 2012. Details on all of this can be found at www.dartmoor.gov.uk/haytorhoppa



ACROSS THE COUNTRY



Cycling gets a boost!

£15 million pounds of new funding for sustainable travel projects has been

announced by the Travel Minister Norman Baker with the aim of improving links between rail and cycle travel.

The big map unfolded

An online map with details and ideas to help plan your perfect walk has been developed by the ramblers: go to www.walkmag.co.uk/big-walk-map/



ramblers
at the heart of walking



Mind the gap...

Both the British Mountaineering Council and the Ramblers Association report disappointment with the Country, Land and Business Association (CLA)'s recent publication and vision for the future of countryside access - "*The Right Way Forward*". The report calls for a "shake-up" in the access and the rights of way system. Both sides of the argument can be read by visiting the following links:

www.thebmc.co.uk/bmc-see-cla-report-as-backward-step

www.ramblers.org.uk/news/Latest+news/The+wrong+way+forward

www.cla.org.uk/News_and_Press/Latest_Releases/Access_to_the_Countryside/Rights_of_Way/1009334.htm/

A woman in a pink shirt and dark trousers is walking two black dogs across a suspension bridge. The bridge is made of metal and has a wire mesh railing. It spans a calm river that reflects the surrounding green trees and foliage. The scene is set in a lush forest with large trees and dense vegetation.

Ready for an adventure?

Get out and about with the National Trust on Dartmoor

Castle Drogo, Lydford Gorge, Finch Foundry, Parke and Plym Valley.

Go walking, cycling, orienteering, running, wildlife watching or just enjoy a lazy day or cup of tea in fabulous surroundings.

Explore our places at www.DartmoorNT.org.uk



National Trust
Time well spent

TED HUGHES OM

1930 - 1998

SQUELCHY BOGS
AND STANZAS

Mark is a globetrotting freelance travel journalist and photographer writing for many national newspapers and magazines. He lives on Dartmoor with his partner and two slightly naughty horses.

High upon Dartmoor's rough bounds lies a simple granite rock which from a distance appears as a natural feature on the landscape. However, closer inspection reveals the stone's secret. Inscribed are the words: Ted Hughes OM....1930-1998.

For the stereotypical dour north countyman who became one of the nation's greatest poets, it was the rolling expanses of Devon in 'the soft south' which became his spiritual home.

You are soaked with the cold rain -
Like a pelt in tanning liquor.
The moor's swollen waterbelly
Swags and quivers,
ready to burst at a step.
(Ted Hughes, *Snipe*)

The recent and overdue induction of former poet laureate, Ted Hughes', into Westminster Abbey's Poet's Corner, was my inspiration for a classic walk into northern Dartmoor's brooding centre.

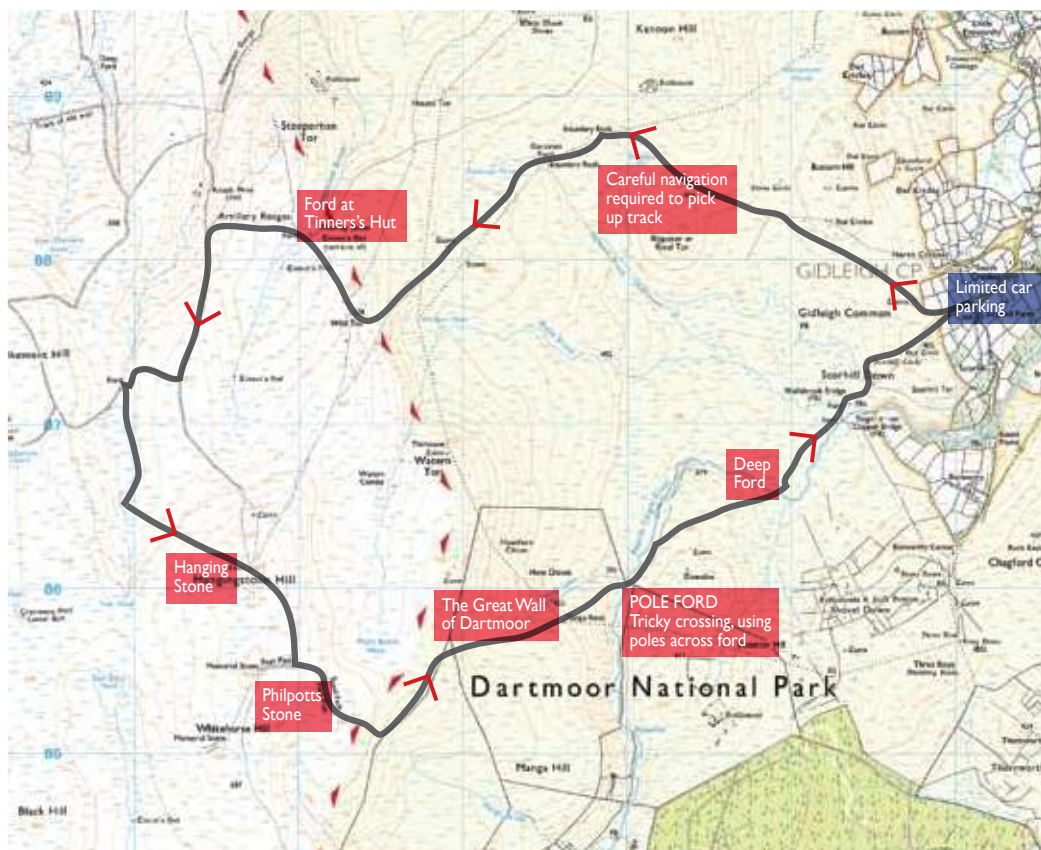
After the Yorkshire-born Hughes had attained critical success in 1957 with *The Hawk in the Rain* collection, the poet moved to North Tawton, just outside the National Park, in 1961. Throughout a turbulent personal and productive literary career he remained in Devon for the rest of his life. His poetry was strongly influenced by a love of nature and the countryside, and so upon his death in 1998 his ashes were spread near a favoured spot at Taw Head on

Dartmoor. A memorial stone later followed at this remote location.

This walk, therefore, seeks out his memorial stone, and in the process explores a realm few people ever experience where the embryonic rivers of the Taw, Dart and Teign, rise. It's not for the faint-hearted or inexperienced walker however. On a sunny day the golden grassland and blooming heather etch indelible memories of benevolent beauty into the mind. But more often during fearsomely blustery days of cascading rain the journey to Taw Head can seem desolate, crossing mires, as Hughes so eloquently wrote, that 'Swags and quivers, ready to burst at a step'. ➡



The flame-red moon, the harvest moon,
Rolls along the hills, gently bouncing,
A vast balloon,
Till it takes off, and sinks upward
To lie on the bottom of the sky,
like a gold doubloon.
(Ted Hughes, *Harvest Moon*)



Ordnance Survey mapping © Crown Copyright: AM49/12

This circular walk from Scorhill is by no means the most direct or definitive route to Hughes' Memorial Stone. But besides avoiding some of the moor's boggy patches, I believe it embodies the archetypal Dartmoor yomp.

We'll lace up our boots at Scorhill Car Park: located at the abrupt terminus of a narrowing lane running via Murchington from Chagford. A short hike upslope, passing through a gate, delivers us onto Gidleigh Common's open moorland. What a view greets us. A granite-studded necklace of tors crowns the horizon, including my own favourite, Watern Tor, whose form reminds me of an ocean wave.

First up, Scorhill stone circle (SX655874) lays a short detour to your left – most likely Bronze Age with some thirty fallen and standing stones. Otherwise our path veers right venturing northwestwards on a distinctly worn track with Rippator (Rival Tor) initially ahead.

After several kilometres our track passes north around Rippator, eventually drifting southwestwards to the first of several ford crossings, at Gartaven. Thereafter along the same track, we climb towards the striking Wild Tor (SX623876), seen at its best in late summertime when ablaze with purple heather as the sun warms its elephantine-like hide. Ascending its tufted calluna

slopes we enter the military-used Okehampton Range: a live firing zone not to be entered if the range posts are flying red flags.

Crossing Wild Tor into the central moor is like stepping over a threshold into a forbidden, uninhabited world of chaotic mires, bubbling streams and mine workings. Ted Hughes' memorial stone is just two-kilometres away but takes some finding. It requires some prudent navigation using available landscape features to handrail progress to it. First departing Wild Tor on a compass setting around 330°, the narrow track initially squeezes between two small boulders downhill affording views ahead, if swirling mists abate, of the slightly

conical Steeperton Tor (with its noticeable military hut). We then ford Steeperton Brook (SX621881) near the crumbling foundations of an old tinner's hut.

Our immediate goal, after a short ascent, is to intercept a rocky track used for military manoeuvres westwards. This convenient track guides us south towards a clear right-hand junction that leads to another ford on the fledgling River Taw (SX609872). It takes a leap of imagination to believe this babbling brook eventually discharges as a mature river into the Bristol Channel some 72km north. It was a favourite river of Hughes, who loved angling, a subject he waxed lyrically about:

*Pike, three inches long, perfect
Pike in all parts, green tigering
the gold,
Killers from the egg: the
malevolent aged grin.*

*They dance on the surface
among the flies.*

(Ted Hughes, *Pike*)

Nearly there and time for some squelching! Don't cross the Taw's ford, instead keep the river to your right taking great care when tracing it over 600m of soggy footsteps. It's then, a mound becomes apparent set in a basin valley ... a prehistoric barrow perhaps? Actually most likely heaped tin workings upon which sits Hughes' small granite commemorative stone (SX609865) like an almond flake on a fairy cake. The Inscription may be simple: "Ted Hughes OM 1930-1998." Yet Taw Head possesses a palpable energy that ensures you'll return on a high.

This return commences by aiming towards Hanginstone Hill (SX617861) with its military hut on a compass reading of 120°. There's something very illusory about Hanginstone's



Wild Tor lives up to its name - adrift in an ocean of rock rain and molinia



A rain soaked lens proves that Manga Rock does exist albeit in wild Teign country

dimensions. It's famous rocking stone, a seesawing slab, looks so much larger from a distance but is actually quite tiny.

From there, we can traverse south to find another memorial, this time to local legend Frank Phillpotts (1837-1909), unofficial patron saint of moorland hikers. A passionate horse-rider and hunter, Phillpotts was responsible for cutting Dartmoor's many 'peat passes': linear channels incised down to granite bedrock, which make for fine navigational aids and drier feet through particularly boggy areas. The peat pass at Whitehorse Hill, which we don't enter, is marked with an engraved stone to Phillpotts (SX617815). Instead, we continue eastwards with Fernworthy Forest and the vaguely volcanic-looking Kes Tor coming into view far away.

After a kilometre a drystone wall of Goldsworthy artistry bisects our decent. We trace it left before entering onto Hew Down through a hunt

gate. It's not easy to find but Manga Rock, an inscribed parish boundary stone, lies ahead as we descend a granite-strewn slope downhill directly to the youthful North Teign River. Our drystone wall reappears again at the slope's base meeting the Teign at SX640860, which we cross by shimmying across the fence railings. We then trace the meandering Teign northwestwards for 1.5km – watching out for kingfishers that Hughes delightfully wrote: 'leave a rainbow splinter sticking in your eye'.

The river's right bank delivers us over two iconic stone clapper bridges at Teign-e-ver (SX654871) and Walla Brook, from where it's a straightforward hike to Scorhill. You may be slightly sodden, assuredly windblown, or glowing from a sunny day, but congratulations, you've made it back from the deepest recesses of Dartmoor's soul. It's little wonder Ted Hughes sought and found poetic inspiration on Dartmoor. ■

AN EASIER ALTERNATIVE

For those a little less confident navigationally, an alternative easier passage to Hughes' memorial stone exists departing from Belstone, just south of the A30, near Okehampton. The route is relatively flat and faithfully follows the River Taw for a 13km return hike. However, its less challenging navigation shouldn't preclude the need for a map, compass, waterproofs, and mobile phone in case of difficulties.

Essential directions include:

Exit Belstone Village to the south following a rough track just above the right bank of the River Taw.

Follow this meandering track for 4km passing below Oke Tor (SX612901).

Continuing south, the route squeezes through a narrow gorge commencing to the right of Steeperton Tor and entering Okehampton Range.

Close to Knack Mine's disused workings (SX614884) a ford crosses the Taw to join the well-defined Military Access track.

Follow this for 1.5km to meet a right-hand junction down to Taw ford at SX609872.

Don't cross the ford but stay on left-hand bank for the 600m squelch to Hughes' memorial.

For variety on the return, instead of tracing the Taw back to Belstone, veer off onto parallel higher ground for a higher-altitude traverse via Oke Tor and Belstone Common's multiple tors.

AN EVEN EASIER ALTERNATIVE

For those preferring a higher ratio of stanzas to kilometres, head to Stover Country Park just outside the National Park on the A328 between Bovey Tracey and Newton Abbot. In 2006 they initiated the two-miles long Ted Hughes Poetry Trail. Circumnavigating Stover's lake, this gentle, largely forested walk is with 16 wooden posts bearing some of Hughes' most famous nature-themed poems, including *The Kingfisher* and *The Thought-fox*.

FOOT FILE

LENGTH: 14.5km (9miles)

TIME: 5-6 hours

START/FINISH: Scorhill Car Park (SX661878)

SUITABLE FOR: Fit and Experienced hikers (see 'alternatives')

MAP: OS Explorer OL28

PUBLIC TRANSPORT: None

to Scorhill. The nearest hub accessible by public transport is Chagford, 4km away, served by the four-times daily 173 service from Exeter (note no Sunday service). LITERATURE: Get in the mood with Hughes' *Moortown Diary* or *The Hawk in the Rain*.

Military Firing Ranges

As a rule of thumb Okehampton Firing Range is usually open to access at weekends and throughout August. For walks inside the range outside this quota it's vital to check whether live firing or manoeuvres are taking place by finding 'Dartmoor Firing Programme' on www.dartmoor-ranges.co.uk



Walking up from Knack Mine to Taw Ford

I had to cycle everywhere to get anywhere

BRENNAN TOWNSHEND THE AD INTERVIEW



Last year 18 year old Brennan Townshend from Chagford entered the

Junior Tour of Wales Cycle Race as a relative unknown in competitive cycling. He finished in first place, winning against a field of well-resourced, race-experienced cyclists. The shocked press centered on the tactics deployed by the familiar characters and the winner from Dartmoor received little more than a footnote. Raleigh, however, were quick to see that this was something extraordinary and even before he had got home they were phoning him up with an offer to join their continental team.

As a younger teenager Brennan's running adventures after school in Okehampton, across the North Moor to his home at Batworthy were legendary with his school mates and neighbours. "I'd stuff all my books into a Camelback rucksack and cross the moor to be home in an hour." At school he had a big reputation of training hard as an endurance athlete. Active Dartmoor was keen to find

out more about this local legend and his commitment to an active lifestyle.

Brennan's home at Batworthy is on the frontier of the North Moor. Its triangular newtake thrusts like the prow of a ship into an ocean of purple moor grass that is Chagford Common. Looking over its walls and past the ancient settlement of Shoveldown, the skyline is lined with the gunmetal grey tors of Watern and Wild Tor. They are like fortified outposts.

Farming the margins of this wilderness with sheep, beef, horses and now turkeys is described as "unrelenting" by his mother Marylou. The farm is at 370m above sea level and it's a long steady wind through the lanes from Chagford passing Thorn and Teigncombe. Snow is often in abundance during the winter months and using the kitchen window was the only way in and out of the farmhouse during last year's big freeze on the moor.

It's with some surprise then that my evening with Brennan and Marylou is a relaxed affair. A cheery smile and a mug of steaming tea greets me at the dark heavy door; inside the split logs are being piled into the Rayburn like it's some ancient locomotive. Brennan is tall, lean and fit looking; laconic and Spartan. Marylou has piercing eyes, wild hair and hands I associate with my climbing buddies. Marylou is clearly very proud of Brennan but she leaves us to it in the kitchen. ■

What's life like at Batworthy?

"My day here will start early - I'm usually first up feeding the turkeys. I help out round the farm chain sawing, splitting firewood, helping with the baling and topping the meadows in the summer. Years ago I would be out on my chestnut pony - sometimes the grey, but that one would always buck me off.

All my mates are in Chagford - we used to ride mountain bikes over dirt jumps we built in the vicar's garden until I broke my wrist. It's remote but I like the independence of living up here."

How did you get into cycling?

"I used to be into rugby and took my training seriously. The running in training was addictive though, until I got knee problems. I then took up road cycling to deal with that injury.

When I was younger my Mum was keen for me to make my own way about (*he didn't get the taxi treatment!* Ed). I had to cycle everywhere to get anywhere."

Do you have any mentors?

"The Mid Devon Cycling Club have been really supportive. They encouraged me to race. Colin Lewis was in the club. He's about 70 and has ridden the Tour du France. He taught me a lot about tactics, when to break away and when to attack. He taught me to leave some in the tank for an attacking finish in a long road race. I also ride with Jon Tiernan-Locke from Plymouth, meeting him at Postbridge. He's at the top of his game, King of the Hill."

How do you support your cycling?

"I'm now with Team Raleigh just back from a training camp in Majorca then off to Mexico and Canada for racing. They are very supportive. The equipment is excellent and the focus is always on training and improving performance.

I also offer cycle maintenance locally. Before I joined Raleigh I had to work hard to raise enough cash. I applied to the Lions Club in Chagford, The Chagford Rec. Trust and the Jeremy Wilson Trust for support and they were all very helpful."

Tell me about your early day's cycling

"I would cycle 20 miles to meet the Club for a 60 mile trip, then cycle home again. I'd often do 100 miles when I was 15, maybe twice a week. Sometimes in winter I'd get close to home and be snowed out."

What are your tactics for a good race?

It's about identifying who will work well together as a breakaway group in order to leave the main pack and then picking the right time to attack. Perfection is to win with an attack in a breakaway group.

How committed are you to training?

"November to January is my pre-season endurance training. February to March I'm time trialling, building up my sprinting power and supporting this with loads of plyometrics. During this time I'll train 300-500 miles week. February to September is race season, racing twice a week covering 250-400 miles a week."

Tell me about your bike?

"I ride a Raleigh sp Team (full carbon fibre with bb30), Shimano Dura Ace groupset, San Marco saddle, ITM bars stem and seatpost, and Shimano RS80 carbon fibre wheels with Shwalbe tyres and a gold KMC superlight chain."

Is that expensive?

"Yes. But it's worth it."

How do you relax?

"In September I'll take a rest and go mountain biking around Fernworthy Forest. It's a top spot. I like good coffee to relax with."

What is your favourite ride on Dartmoor?

"Down past Moretonhamstead to Bovey, Ashburton, Dartmeet, Tavistock, Okehampton and home. It's 90 miles with some great hills and the scenery is always spectacular. I've done it in gales and a blizzard."

Top spot on the Moor?

"Watern Tor looking back towards Batworthy."

Top tips for others?

"Sticking at it and setting targets." (In the next room Marylou can't resist shouting out that he's incredibly disciplined!)

Tea or coffee?

"Coffee."

Apple or banana?

"Banana."

Beer or wine?

"Neither! Maybe some local cider."



Brennan and Marylou at Batworthy

Explore Bellevue Forest

Enjoy the tranquility of a picnic by the East Dart River or an exhilarating walk up to Bellevue Tor to take in the stunning views. Explore the forest itself and discover a wealth of wildlife, archaeology and grazing Dartmoor ponies. **Bellevue Forest, near Postbridge**



www.forestry.gov.uk



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Adventure days from £42, inc 2 activities and lunch.

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MOOR FOOD THAN MEETS THE EYE



Mark Lane is a Wilderness Guide. He teaches a range of bushcraft, woodcraft, primitive living and wilderness skills. Mark is a member of the *Dartmoor Wilderness Guide Community* – a growing community of guides and instructors dedicated to professionalism, safety and knowledge for activities that take place in the wild outdoors.

To find out more please visit www.wildernessguide.co.uk

Hunter-GATHERERS of yore would have used a strong tradition of passing knowledge down through the generations. Evolution would have provided a hard-earned lesson as to what was edible and what was 'deadible', what killed or cured. These gatherers must have had an excellent memory of their local resource – they were expert in what was growing where and feeding when. Their territory would have been substantial but often quite defined (although they would have been constantly pushing at these boundaries). Building up an intimate knowledge of their 'patch' was key to the survival of their people.

The high, bleak moorland is not naturally the first place to go foraging, but wild food is available. For instance, in July, Bilberries (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) can be delicious and harvested in worthwhile quantities across parts of the Moor. However, it is in the valleys and along the verges of Dartmoor that will provide a more diverse habitat and sheltered micro climate when searching for fruit, foliage or flowers. On a typical afternoon's forage, at most times of year, you should be able to readily find between half a dozen to a couple of dozen specimens for a salad, a potage or to make into a tea or jam. You will also discover that many have medicinal qualities or can be used to make practical

items such as cordage or used as a dye. It is always worth bearing in mind that these high places tend to have a shorter growing season and plants can develop a little later than in the lowlands.

A hunger for plant lore will give an extra perspective as you travel through nature. It will no longer be just a 'green blur'. All of a sudden it will be laced with extra meaning. It will become a place where you can eat the view, become as close to nature as you can by looking through the sharp, enquiring eyes of your ancestors.

The Dart, Teign and Bovey valleys are a good place to start – giving you sheltered spots, byways and transition habitats from river, woodland, meadow to moorland. Good foraging can be found around the various reservoirs including Burrator, Venford, Trenchford, Tottiford and Kennick. The woods and byways around Holne and Lustleigh are also a good bet. But don't restrict yourself to these, let your natural curiosity take you to discover new places.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Wild crab apples | 7 Hawthorn jelly |
| 2 Wild crab apple jelly | 8 Damson jam |
| 3 Damsons | 9 Wild strawberries |
| 4 Bilberries | 10 Acorns (need processing to be safe) |
| 5 Bilberry smoothie | 11 Elderberry |
| 6 Hawthorn berries | 12 Elderflower cordial |
| (beware: pip contains toxins, flesh is medicinal) | |



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Identifying plants

Plant ID can remain an inscrutable subject for many. I use a triangulation method when trying to identify a new plant – one guide is a classic field guide that groups plants by colour, flower type and then habitat. I use another guide that groups things by genus – this is useful to double check on plants of the same family that may share similar characteristics and that have been identified with the first guide. Finally, I use a guide (photographic) that takes plants by month to show what is flowering or seeding or fruiting. By using this method ID becomes a much more confident exercise. There are many excellent guides but the three books I most often use for this method are:



- Wild Flowers of Britain and Northern Europe – Fitter, Fitter and Blamey (ISBN 0002112787 (grouped by genus)
- Wild Flowers – Aichele and Golte-Bechtle ISBN 0706404742 (grouped by characteristic and habitat)
- Wild Flowers of Britain – Roger Phillips ISBN 033025183x (grouped by calendar date).



The Law

The 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act states that '...if any person ...not being an authorised person, intentionally uproots any wild plant...shall be guilty of an offence.' There is also a special list of plants on its 'schedule 8' and it is an offence to damage them. Similarly, there are laws protecting the picking of plants not on Schedule 8 that are protected by a conservation status such as SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest). Fines can be significant for doing so.

However, the fundamental law governing foraging is the common law right to collect the 'four f's – fruit, flowers, foliage and fungi'. This is enshrined in the 1968 Theft Act. The two things to emphasize are that the plants are wild (and not farmed or planted with a purpose) and that you are picking for personal and not commercial use.

'A person who picks mushrooms growing wild on any land, or who picks flowers, fruit or foliage from a plant growing wild on any land, does not (although not in possession of the land) steal what he picks, unless he does it for reward, or for sale or other commercial purpose'

What this law is actually saying is that if someone is trespassing they are not committing an act of theft. There are of course exceptions and on some land this right has been withdrawn through use of a byelaw prohibiting the collection of any plant, fungus or animal. However, you can still be 'done' for trespass!

If you are on private land, without implicit or explicit permission from the land-owner then it is trespass. Where access has been granted or allowed or if you are on a public right of way (PROW) then you should be okay.

Land given access rights under the Countryside and Rights Of Way (CROW) Act confers no right to collect wild food. The Act states no one is entitled to be on the land if they '.....intentionally remove, damage or destroy any plant, shrub, tree or root or any part of a plant, shrub, tree or root.' In this instance you can do little other than take a walk.



When a site is registered as an SSSI, a declaration is drawn up of its biological, physical (even geological) characteristics that make it special. It is an offence to damage any of these characteristics – and this will probably include its plants. It is usual for the publication of such a declaration to list 'operations likely to damage' the site. Within the declaration is usually the term stating something like 'removal of or damage to any plant, fungus or animal'. You have been warned!

Food Safety

Sharing knowledge about wild food is a great pleasure but also a grave responsibility. There is a bewildering array of plants, they can look different from your field guide, they can take different forms (like over-wintering as a rosette) at different times of year, they can change in edibility and different parts of the same plant can be safe or unsafe. Also, plants growing in different places, soils or climates can have changing concentrations of active chemicals or pests within them. This can present a real challenge and especially so since people also have varying degrees of sensitivity and reaction to them.

- Do not EVER eat anything unless you are 110% sure of its identification and that it is safe for you (or others) to consume.
- Different plants can be safe or unsafe at different times of year. If you cannot remember which part of the plant is used and when then leave it alone.
- Different people can react to different plants in different ways. Just as no two plants are the same, neither are two people.
- Even those plants that are regarded as 'safe' should be approached with some care. For instance – Nettles, normally regarded as okay, can reduce blood sugar levels and blood pressure. Similarly, hawthorn is a significant cardiac herb but one I use often to make fruit leathers and 'turkish delights'. So check your personal tolerance to ANY new edible wild plant before consuming in quantity.
- If you have a medical condition or are taking medication then you must seek professional medical advice before ingesting wild plants as they may contain stuff that impairs or amplifies that medication or your condition.
- Some plants need processing (e.g thorough cooking) to make them safe to eat.
- Do take special care in noting where the plant grows – it could be contaminated land, or sprayed with chemicals or other pollutants that will make them unsafe. You might not be able to see the weedkiller, the liver fluke, the dog poo or the heavy metal left by a car exhaust!

So, if the difficulty in identifying plants, risk of breaking the law, or putting your health in jeopardy has not put you off from this fascinating and rewarding pastime then the following tips on foraging, kit, courses and further reading should provide further inspiration!

13 Jack-by-the-hedge

14 Rowan berries (beware: pip contains toxins)

15 Ramson flower buds (Wild garlic)

Top tips on wild food:



Nettle beer

- Get to know your local habitat – in every season – and understand what grows and does not grow when and where.
- Start with your garden or your walk to work.
- Start with the safer and more easily identifiable plants.
- Start with one plant and get to know it really well – what it looks like, what similar plants it could be mistaken for, what properties it has, how to cook it. Once familiar then learn a new plant. Over time you will speed up.



Lamb's lettuce

- Make note of similarities in 'families' of plants. It helps with plant ID.
- There are edible plants and medicinal plants – sometimes they are both so extra awareness on how this might affect you and others is needed
- Know your poisonous plants – it is more important to know the bad ones and not just the good ones! Some are similar to edible species, some are more difficult and dangerous to identify - like fungi and umbellifers – and are best left alone. Getting it wrong can result in permanent injury or even death.

- Don't uproot any wild plant and only pick flowers, fruit or foliage in moderation. Ensure that plenty is left for others to enjoy. If a specimen really is needed, remove the minimum quantity of material. Don't strip a plant – it could kill it – leave the majority of its flowers, foliage or fruit.
- Be careful not to damage or trample other vegetation when picking.
- Information on plants in danger of extinction nationally or locally are published in national Red Data Books and County Rare Plant Registers.
- If a plant can be named in the field take the field guide to it, not vice versa.
- Be careful not to trespass when picking plants and never take material from a nature reserve or protected site without permission.



Hop tips in butter

- The Botanical Society of the British Isles publishes a 'Code of Conduct' for the collecting of plant matter. This can be found at: www.bsbi.org.uk/Code_of_Conduct.pdf
- Unkempt road verges and public rights of way are often good sources of wild plants, but look out for traffic and remember pollution!
- Don't worry if you forage only a little – just one extra ingredient can give a normal dish an interesting twist or unique decoration. Remember – many things can be cooked and preserved for later use.
- Take someone along to forage who knows much more than you!



Wild garlic leaves

MORE INFO

Essential Kit

- Field guide
- Camera (with macro)
- Specimen bag
- Magnifying glass
- Gloves
- UK legal-carry pocketknife (non-locking folder, with a cutting edge less than 3 inches)



Foraging Courses

- Dan Thompson Mills – Steward Wood Community - www.stewardwood.org
- Robin Harford - www.eatweeds.co.uk
- Marcus Harrison - www.wildfoodschoo.co.uk/

Wild Food books & resources

- One of the most useful resources on the uses and edibility of plants is: Plants For A Future (www.pfaf.org) – it has a database of over 7,000 useful plants. Please support this site so it is a resource for future generations.
- Roger Phillips: *Wild Food* - ISBN-13: 978-0330280693
- Miles Irving: *The Forager Handbook* - ISBN-13: 978-0091913632
- Robin Harford: *Eatweeds Wild Food Recipes* www.eatweeds.co.uk/book

Disclaimer – This article is NOT telling you to go out and eat wild plants without proper instruction! **DO NOT** use this article as a guide as to what is safe for you or others to eat. Learn from other sources and know absolutely (110%) what you are picking and consuming and what affect it might have on you and others – **before** you go off and test your knowledge! The author accepts no responsibility for any errors or omissions in this article. **Eating wild plants is entirely at your own risk.** Just because I have eaten them and/or they are mentioned in this article does not mean that they are safe for anyone to eat. Do not feed wild plants to other people without their consent. Learn the necessary precautions by going on a course - see above.



The Dartmoor Expedition Centre

Unhooking the karabiners that latch the gate at Rowden, John Earle's Dartmoor longhouse, I know I have entered the lair of an explorer. In his flagstoned kitchen we drink good coffee out of earthenware mugs. The teak coloured bookshelves are crammed with books on exploration and climbing - there are black and white photos of mountains encountered and the legendary explorer Eric Shipton. Shipton, along with Tilman, was responsible for the 1934 expedition to the Garhwal Himalaya. It is still regarded as the epitome of adventurous mountaineering. Eric was clearly a big influence on John, "The Dartmoor Expedition Centre grew from my early work with Eric at Outward Bound Eskdale and it seemed the natural extension to the work I was later doing with the BBC." John explained. "Dartmoor was the choice for my wife Pauline and I to set this up." I ask him why not The Lakes or Wales. "There is something here; the history, the working of the land and the space. It all adds up to a genuine wilderness experience. And with his exploration of mountainous ranges across the globe and an in-depth knowledge of Dartmoor - John should know. I get the royal treatment with a tour of the ancient outbuildings with their classic Dartmoor broad and narrow stonework and their conversion to practical bunkhouse accommodation. Stood under a towering photo of the Matterhorn John states "Pauline and I wanted to develop our idea in keeping with the wilderness of Dartmoor and the welcoming atmosphere of a classic mountain hut." With the rare cobbled floors, woodburning stoves and bunk rooms in the eaves - they have done just that.



FACT FILE

The Dartmoor Expedition Centre offers year round bunkhouse accommodation that is simple and robust.

Information
www.dartmoorbase.co.uk
01364 621249

Cost £14/head
Accommodation

Two main bunk-rooms with 34 beds. Sleeping bag required. There is communal dining, kitchen areas and showers. Meals for small groups can be booked on request. Activities can be arranged with local providers.

Location Slap bang in the middle of Dartmoor - see website for details.



From top right

Eric Shipton and John Earle 1963

Filming on Baffin Island

John Earle

Bunk room

Rowden

PHOTOGRAPH SUE VICCARS

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Competition

We have two pairs of men's and two pairs of women's sports shoes - The Updraft (RRP is £70) and the Torlan (RRP £90) from Chacos to give away in the great Active Dartmoor competition.

Chacos traditionally produced sandals that were required for the demanding activities of rafting and kayaking. Chacos aim to produce durable, adjustable and great fit products that outlast the competition. The range has now expanded with footwear and sandals for all year round use.



To enter the competition answer the following question:

"Which great National Park did Steven Spielberg choose as his location to film the Block buster War Horse?"

TO ENTER email or post your entry to:

Edgemoor Publishing Limited Museum Courtyard 3 West Street Okehampton
Devon EX20 1HQ simon@activedartmoor.com (with "Chaco" as the subject line).
Closing date 29th June 2012

The correct winning entry will be picked out of a hat and will receive their shoes by post. (NB subject to stock/size availability; Chacos will send out an alternative model if necessary)

Competition

SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE

"I liked getting to know the adventurous side of my friends - we all did." Overheard on the Young Spirit programme



"If you go out the back door, our nearest neighbour is 11 miles away in Okehampton," says John Diplock, joint owner of Spirit of Adventure based at Powdermills near Postbridge. "It's a special place on the edge of the North Moor - one I've been very privileged to live and work in."

Powdermills backs on to some of the most adventurous landscape in England and Wales and it is easy to see why this remote location suited the original function of the place as a 19th century gun powder

factory. John describes his journey into business: "I started Spirit of Adventure 18 years ago with my business partner Sandy Simpson. We were on an 8000 metre Himalayan peak called Makalu and thought that we had something in common worth pursuing outdoors when we got back."

After a while searching the country they found their ideal location. "Dartmoor offers many opportunities for the novice or expert to try a wide range of adventurous activities. It's within a three hour drive of London which is not too

long for a wild weekend," said John.

Like many businesses the first year was a risky time for the two partners. John explains the situation they faced. "We had one booking to start with, had to eat beans for a year and deliver Yellow Pages to earn some much needed cash in between jobs; but we did have an understanding landlord with Colin Sturmer from the Duchy of Cornwall who own Powdermills."

Today Spirit is one of the key providers of outdoor activities on Dartmoor and

a significant local employer generating enough work for 4 full time staff and 15 freelance instructors. New this year is the employment of an apprentice instructor in conjunction with South Devon College.

John describes the business segments they manage. "Our main work coincidentally is with the Princes Trust, providing experiential personal development courses for young adults, but equally important is our Young Spirit programme for schools and young children plus our High Hopes which provides

THE TOP 6

We asked the Instructors at Spirit of Adventure to describe their passion for adventure and their top spot on the moor:



Hello I'm John, happiest out on the moor at first light, listening to the ravens morning calls, as my friendly Labrador, Echo, chases dreams around the gorse bushes!



My name is Martin and my favourite place on Dartmoor is Burrator Reservoir. I am currently training for the London marathon and it's a great place to run as it is so picturesque and relatively flat!



My name is Steve and despite running various activities around the moor with Spirit of Adventure there is nothing better for blowing away the cobwebs than cycling.



Hi, my name is Sam and I have lived on Dartmoor all my life. My favourite place on Dartmoor is Bonehill Rocks. The bouldering is awesome and the views are fantastic.

Try something different this summer -
Release your family's adventurous spirit

In conjunction with *Active Dartmoor* magazine Spirit of Adventure are offering the following days for families to meet a qualified instructor and sample the adventurous nature of Dartmoor.

We are offering **ROCK CLIMBING** and **ABSEILING** or **CANOEING** and at £25/head this provides exceptional value for qualified instruction and provision of all necessary equipment in one of the finest landscapes in the British Isles. Ideal for family groups.

Saturday 14th of July
Monday 23rd July
Monday 6th August
Monday 20th August

PLEASE CONTACT
01822 880277
for more details and to book a place

Powdermills at Postbridge
With Longaford Tor and the North Moor behind



outdoor opportunities for adults with learning difficulties."

"We also run a bunkhouse business at Powdermills with self catering for up to 26 people. It's very popular with paddling and walking groups. Lastly there is our overseas travel programme and introductory programme on Dartmoor where

individuals or family and friend groups can make a booking with us." ■

FACT FILE

SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE
CONTACT: 01822 880277
LOCATION: Powdermills,
Princetown, Devon, PL20 6SP
www.spirit-of-adventure.com

Spirit of Adventure, your local activity providers, based right in the heart of Dartmoor National Park

Spirit of Adventure

Young Spirit

Courses

Adventure

Water skills

Activity & Adventure Specialists
01822 880277
martin@spirit-of-adventure.com
www.spirit-of-adventure.com

WWW.SPIRIT-OF-ADVENTURE.COM



Hi, my name is Matt, Sheepstor is my favourite place to be on the moor because the views looking over Burrator Reservoir and the climbing is fantastic!!



Hi, I'm AJ! I love climbing and the Dewerstone Rock is the best place to go! This is because it has some classic routes which have an amazing view when you top out.



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Staying on Dartmoor

dartmooraccommodation.co.uk

GOING FOR A SONG



Pied Flycatcher near Dartmeet
PHOTOGRAPH © BRYAN MOBLEY



Rebecca Mansell has had stories and articles published in a variety of magazines. She writes educational resources for colleges all over the country and is a qualified teacher of law and psychology. She loves Tavistock and particularly the moors where her two Springer spaniels keep her active by taking her for a walk...

You don't have to wear an anorak to be a birdwatcher, you know.

You needn't own a top of the range pair of binoculars to be able to tell your Peewit from your Green Plover (even though they are the same) or sketch accurate, artistic images of your sightings onto your notepad using the pencil hanging round your neck. It isn't necessary to babble on about which is really the smallest bird in Britain (the Firecrest, though some say the Goldcrest) to any poor soul who will listen. Just using your senses well is sufficient, feeling a little bit of wonder when you spot the notorious Dartmoor Buzzard is also good and realising that occasionally you actually may have to wear an anorak; particularly when it rains, is just plain sensible.

You already know that Dartmoor National Park is bursting with legend and intriguing history but were you aware that it is also a magical paradise for spotting an intriguing variety of birds? The sweeping hills with

nestling granite tors and the moorland wilderness offers the opportunity for sighting flourishing bird populations as well as the more endangered species over its 368 square miles of moorland, woodland, reservoirs and farmland. Lonesome ruins, bogs and rolling valleys contribute to this beautiful rugged landscape while increasing your chances of glimpsing a wandering Hen Harrier or sighting the elusive Ring Ouzle.

Many birdwatchers declare that there is nothing more satisfying than spotting a Golden Plover for the first time or hearing the plaintive cry of the Curlew or distinguishing a Rock Pipit from a Meadow Pipit but birdwatching is free therapy and a form of escapism too. What can be more relaxing than traipsing the moors while being at one with nature and getting the unique chance to visit the bird haven that is Dartmoor? Apart from benefiting from lashings of vitamin D from the

sun, birdwatching is a great way to maintain fitness as you climb the hills and explore the tors.

There are millions of birdwatchers all over the world but don't be put off by the clichéd image of a 'twitcher' who obsessively races all over the country with hundreds of others to spot a rare bird; you can enjoy birdwatching on whatever level you wish. Bill Oddie, an expert birding celebrity, says that he has met a broad spectrum of all types of people who enjoy birdwatching from millionaire businessmen to clergy, punks to footballers. So when your heart leaps because you've identified a Stonechat or a Linnet, be warmly welcomed into the enchanting world of birds. You won't want to leave.

Fancy sneaking onto the moor about an hour before sunrise with just a flicker of light in the sky? Okay, so perhaps you hadn't envisaged indulging in a spot of birdwatching quite so early but if you want the chance to be surrounded by a world infused with beautiful birdsong along with the opportunity of a being a spectator to songbird activity, then visiting Dartmoor before sun-up

is a special experience to write in your diary. A world without bird song would be a sad and silent world indeed and the dawn chorus in spring and summer is the best example of birdsong you will ever hope to hear. It is also common knowledge amongst experienced birdwatchers that you are far more likely to observe more birds at the start of the day then, say, the afternoon.

A fine, clear day with little wind between April and July would be best but still wrap up warm as it can be nippy so early in the morning. Pick a favourite spot on Dartmoor and remain there and get ready for a gradual build up to a symphony of song by mid morning. At first, one or two birds sing and then more join in.

As it is only the male birds singing, their burst of melody is to show ownership of a territory as well as to demonstrate their considerable health and vitality to sing so intensively which attracts females and then they must also defend their patch against other males. Listen out for and eventually hopefully see Song Thrush, Willow Warblers, Bullfinch, Lesser Redpoll and Great Spotted Woodpecker to

PHOTOGRAPH © PETE WALKDEN



Hen Harrier hunting near the Warren House Inn in winter

PHOTOGRAPH © PHIL NEVARD



Lapwing seen near Bonehill rocks

name just a few. Local bird expert and professional tour guide Phil Page (Dartmoor Nature Tours) tells me that from mid May onwards the Nightjar can be heard 'churring' at places such as Trendlebere Down and Fernworthy Reservoir.

As you take pleasure in the breathtaking beauty of Dartmoor, consider exploring woodland areas

to observe the Pied Flycatcher and the Wood Warbler, areas of gorse for the Linnet and the grassland for Wheatears. Birds of prey such as the Peregrine Falcon, Hobby and Kestrel have all been sighted on Dartmoor and don't forget boggy areas for Snipe with the male's eerie "drumming" display in the early mornings. ■

PHOTOGRAPH © IAN TRAYNOR



Golden Plover

WET VALLEYS	Lesser Redpolls, Grasshopper Warbler
MOORLAND AREAS WITH SCRUB	Yellowhammer, Whinchat, Whitethroat, Cuckoo
GORSE	Stonechat, Linnet, Dunnock
STREAMS, RIVERS	Grey Wagtail, Dipper, Goosander
GRASSY MOORLAND	Meadow Pipits, Skylarks
EVERYWHERE	Ravens, Buzzards

The weather on Dartmoor can be unpredictable, even in the summer, so consider in advance what to wear on your birding expedition. Layers of dark coloured t-shirts are a good idea, anything easy to tie around your waist as well as waterproofs and comfortable boots.

Remember a water bottle/flask as well as a camera and/or binoculars if you have them. A map of Dartmoor and a small bird guide and a little hardbacked notebook and pen/pencil are ideal but you don't want to be reading or writing too much and miss an unexpected bird. If you do get a chance though, you may wish to sketch a bird quickly and add a couple of notes (see below). It doesn't have to be a work of art, just enough to be able to look the bird up later.

You could be very lucky to spot a Barn Owl hastily searching for his breakfast or hear the cry of the Dartmoor Buzzard in no time at all; see a Stonechat or a Meadow Pipit before you have even glanced at your watch to note the hour. It isn't the amount of time you have for this birding encounter that is important but how you use it; simple strategies on how to see birds and using your alert senses is all you need to know!

DARTMOOR BIRDING LOCATIONS

- Dart Valley Woods
- Hound Tor to Haytor
- Challacombe Farm and Valley
- East Dartmoor National Nature Reserve

www.dartmoornaturetours.co.uk

Why not discover Dartmoor's wildlife with a professional Nature Guide? Phil Page has been leading guided walks on Dartmoor since 1986. Phil has appeared on many Radio and TV programmes and has published and featured in articles on Dartmoor in several newspapers and magazines (The Times, Bird Watching, Dartmoor Magazine).

TIPS ON IDENTIFYING A BIRD

Look intently at a bird and take it in...

Ask yourself questions to maintain a mental picture such as; how big is it? What other bird does it look like? What colours does it have? What shape is it? Where is it? Month of year?

This will help you to acquire accurate visual recall to look it up in your well thumbed bird book!

THE IMPORTANCE OF HELPING NESTING BIRDS (THE BIRD CODE)

The bird breeding season is from the beginning of March to the end of July. Birds can be forced to leave their nests if they are disturbed with fatal consequences so always keep your dog on a lead, try to keep to tracks and paths if you can and avoid young birds on the ground. Remember, the birds interests must always come first.

PHOTOGRAPH © PHILIPPE BOISSEL



Skylark

Always remember... to raise your binoculars to your eyes when you see a bird; not to look down at your binoculars as you could miss a valuable sighting. When you are out roaming the moors, be silent and avoid sudden movement. The more camouflaged you are with the environment the better and do use your ears as well as your eyes; you will see much more if you listen for bird calls and songs, and movements too in trees or bushes. With this in mind, also look out for activities around you as our eyes are instantly attracted to moving birds and also scan the sky constantly as well as scrutinise different levels and distances.

And finally; any walk across Dartmoor can be as short or as long as you wish and involve as much hiking as you desire. Just keep your eyes and ears open and you are bound to spot a bird of your Dartmoor dreams...

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO WATCHING BIRDS

When you are roaming around Dartmoor, equipped with your binoculars and bird guide and little sketch pad, think about what kind of bird would like this habitat. Search the woodland areas for Tits, Nuthatches, Woodpeckers and Flycatchers, the hedgerows for Whitethroats, Blackbirds and Song Thrushes and the moor for Golden Plover, Grouse and Snipe. Woodland areas reveal an exuberant dawn chorus to listen to.

Remember, move slowly and quietly when bird spotting and be prepared for a really memorable day out on Dartmoor.

BIRDS YOU ARE LIKELY TO SEE...

Ring Ouzel, Redstart, Wheatear, Whinchat, Pied and Spotted Flycatcher, Wood Warbler in woodlands and open moorland, Goosander on the River Dart

BIRDS YOU ARE LIKELY TO HEAR...

Grasshopper Warbler, Stonechat Cuckoo. In the evenings at Believer Forset - Nightjar and Woodcock, Tawny Owl and out early on the moor - Snipe "drumming with dead mens bones" spooky!

RARITIES...

Black-throated Thrush, Black Stork, Iberian Chiffchaff, Black Kite, Montagu's Harrier, Common Crane, Dotterel, Stone Curlew, Golden Oriole, Wryneck, Hoopoe, Yellow-browed Warbler, Common Rosefinch and Snow Bunting.

Advised by Steve Waite, Devon County Bird Recorder for the DBWPS (Devon Birdwatching and Preservation Society).

MORE INFO

Helpful Dartmoor courses, websites and clubs:

www.rspb.org.uk/
The Devon Bird Watching & Preservation Society (DBWPS)
www.devonbirds.org
www.legendarydartmoor.co.uk
www.dartmoornaturetours.co.uk

Favourite books

Bill Oddie's *Introduction to Birdwatching*

How to Birdwatch by Stephen Moss

How to be a bad birdwatcher by Simon Barnes

Cosdon and the River Taw

Sue Viccars explores around Belstone



Sue Viccars is a freelance outdoor writer and editor, specialising in southwest England – especially Dartmoor and Exmoor

B Bear right uphill; on meeting a walled enclosure ahead bear right again. At the wall corner look ahead to see two ascending paths; take the one bearing slightly left, uphill, which soon crosses the slopes of Cosdon parallel to Belstone Cleave. This rocky and often wet path crosses several streams, including the Ivy Tor Water, before ascending to reach a tall granite boundary stone. Pass this to meet a broad grassy path; bear left downhill, parallel to a stone wall.

E At the footpath junction turn right along the riverbank path, wet and rocky in places, soon passing the remains of the 19th-century Ivy Tor copper mine. Eventually the path climbs away from the river, then levels, climbing to pass below a walled enclosure. Keep ahead through gorse to meet a

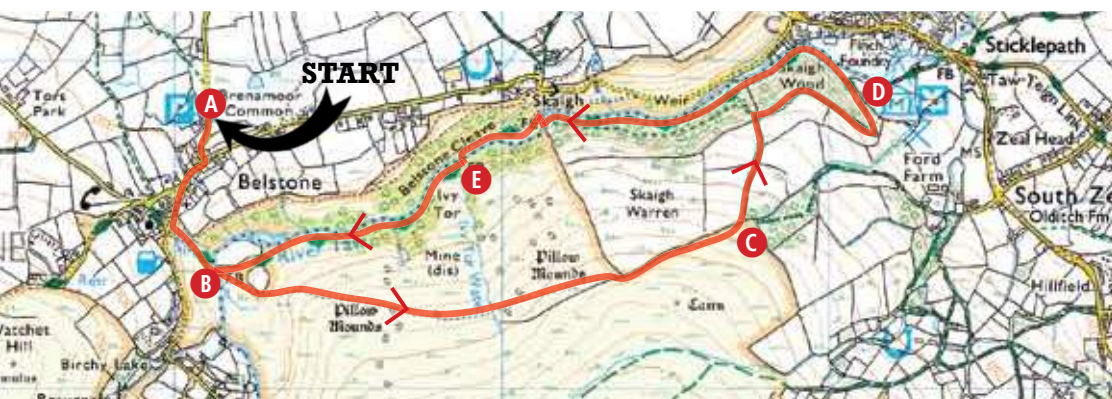
Springtime daffodils on the banks of the River Taw

WHERE TO EAT

Belstone's only pub stands on the site of the cob-and-thatch New Inn, which burned down in 1896 and was replaced by the present solid granite building soon after. The ghostly apparition of a lady said to have died in the fire still makes her presence felt via the occasional cold draught and flickering lights! Owners Tony and Anne Cooper – the former born and bred in Belstone – have been in charge for 13 years. A down-to-earth, unfussy place with a homely feel the pub welcomes walkers and serves hearty fare, including a great range of homecooked pies and puds: steak and kidney, spinach and feta, banana sticky toffee, Bakewell tart, cream and custard...

THE TORS

Belstone Okehampton
Devon PL20 6PJ
Tel: (018237) 840689
www.thetors.co.uk
Open: Mon–Sat 11am–3pm, 6–11pm; Sun 12 noon–4pm, 7–10.30pm (all day in summer holidays)
Food: 12–2pm, 6–9pm; meals £3.70 (soup)–£16.25 (fillet steak); Sunday lunches £7.95 (booking advised); vegetarian options/half portions for children; local produce used wherever possible (Martins Butchers, Okehampton; Dartmoor Brewery, Princetown; Winkleigh Cider); takeaway meals available; special evenings, eg curry, quiz; 65–70 malt whiskies behind the bar!; B&B accommodation available



Of the many options for short circular walks from Belstone on the northern edge of the moor this has to be the loveliest in spring: a run across the lower moorland slopes of Cosdon Hill is followed by a steep descent through Skaigh Wood, then a return along the River Taw. Note: The route could be reversed, giving great views of Belstone village, but going anticlockwise avoids a very steep ascent out of the cleave.

A From the car park turn left to walk through the village, soon reaching the Coronation stone on the green. Fork left to pass the stocks and old village pound. On meeting the Great Green keep ahead across a small parking area to pick up a path that drops towards the River Taw (views over Belstone Cleave left). Just before the ford turn right over a railed footbridge.

C Look for a brideway sign by a gate in the wall: turn left and walk downhill, with a wall and later bank right. At the bottom turn right through a gate on a lovely path that zigzags down through Skaigh Wood to a path junction (keep ahead for Sticklepath pubs/Finch Foundry).

D Turn left to walk along the banks of the Taw, soon passing a restored pond and later the river gauging station. The path narrows and climbs above the river. Cross the Henry Williamson bridge, inscribed with a quote from the North Devon author's novel *Tarka the Otter*. The path bears right to a T-junction; turn left. Around 100yds later turn left to recross the river via Ivy Tor Bridge, rebuilt in 2011.

path; turn right to descend to the ford/footbridge. Cross over and retrace your steps uphill and across the Great Green. On meeting the lane bear left to find The Tors near the church of St Mary the Virgin for well-earned refreshment before retracing the outward route to find your car. ■

FOOT FILE

LENGTH: 4¼ miles (6.8km)
TIME: 2 hours
START/FINISH: Belstone car park SX 621940
TERRAIN: Rocky and uneven in places, especially along sections of flood-damaged riverbank: boots essential
MAP: OS Explorer OL28 Dartmoor
PUBLIC TRANSPORT: None to village; local buses along old A30
PARKING: Belstone car park (free) on way into village



BOULDERING GEAR

EDITOR'S PICKS

PHOTOGRAPH: CARRIE HILL



Bouldering near Cuckoo Rock

Dartmoor, with its wealth of granite, is undoubtedly one of the UK's top-spots for bouldering. One of the major appeals of bouldering is its relatively scant equipment requirements. It is not uncommon to see people bouldering with just climbing shoes, a chalk bag, and a crash mat. Here we review some of the better basics.

(For an overview of bouldering refer to issue 1's bouldering article by Dave Henderson. Novices should seek out professional instruction either with a local climbing wall-see issue 2! - or a local provider such as Ibex Outdoors)

SHOES

Climbing shoes have become specific tools for different rock types and angles, making them a difficult choice. What is important is the fit. For bouldering I prefer the holy grail that is an asymmetric technical all-round performer that I can wear all day such



as the **La Sportiva Katana** (£110). For getting from the car to Bonehill or relaxing in The Carpenters Arms try a pair of **Chacos Torlan** approach shoes - part of a new range of high quality outdoor shoes from Colorado USA. Go to www.chacos.com or phone 0207 8600 100 for details.



CRASH PADS

Along with a spotter, this is essential kit for saving ankles, knees and back as well as minimising erosion and



environmental impact at the bottom of the Tors. I prefer a 'taco-fold' mat that doesn't have a weak spot with a hinge:

Black Diamond satellite (£99) is designed as a small secondary or travel crash pad. It's difficult to get hold of, so if you see one this may be the one impulse buy you won't regret. **DMM** produce a classic monster pad, the huge squidgy **Dyno** (£165). I usually fall asleep on mine.

CHALK BAGS, BUCKETS & CHALK

To avoid sweaty, slippery fingertips chalk is key. Use chalk balls for indoors, loose chalk such as **Metolius Super Chalk** (£5.25) for outdoors. Carry your own chalk round in a chalk bag or better still, bring a **Prana Bucket Bag** (£35) - its like bringing a keg of Jail Ale to a party.

CLOTHING

For cool movement get kitted out with a **Patagonia Sloucher** beanie, **Patagonia baggy** Lightweight Climb Pants and a **New Devon Army** hoodie.



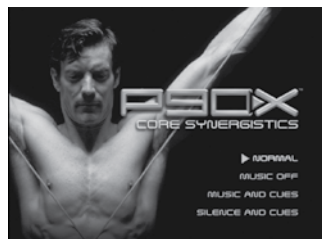
Don't forget a proper warm up (at least 15 minutes and staying warm between problems - use gloves and a duvet jacket) is absolutely essential. **The Lapis Brush** (£4.60) for cleaning excess chalk off holds is a good idea plus "having one of these beauties holstered in your chalk bag will definitely increase your street cred!" After trashing your tips at Bonehill - give your fingers some much needed TLC with **Climb On** available at www.javu.co.uk.

RAINING? TRAINING...

Any self-respecting climber can't call their house 'home' until they have nailed up a fingerboard. **The Beastmaker 1000** (£75) is, quite frankly, the best board



available: www.beastmaker.co.uk. For some good fingerboard workouts to help you make the beast with one awesome back, go to www.planetfear.com.



Feeling a bit of a podge? **P90X** is a 90 day schedule for training indoors on wet winter evenings. Disappear from the scene, then re-emerge 90 days later all lean and keen.

BITS & BOBS

Available at www.javu.co.uk: Zinc oxide tape **Dream tape** (£4.50). For those prone to tendon injury through overuse. There is a good article at: www.chockstone.org/TechTips/FingerTaping.

KNOWLEDGE

Getting good beta is key to a great day out. The website www.javu.co.uk is the guide to bouldering on the moor.



The new guidebook **Boulder Britain**

Britain (£25) which covers Dartmoor has been described thus "...Often we don't know what we want until we get it, Steve Jobs understood that, and so does *Boulder Britain's* author Niall Grimes..." To avoid potential conflict over car parking and access issues get the National Park's code of conduct for climbing, follow the Country Code and check out the BMC website www.thebmc.co.uk.

WHERE TO BUY

Obviously you can search on line, but try to support your local outlets such as Kountrykit, Taunton Leisure and Cotswolds at Darts Farm. The Barn Climbing Centre is a local climbing wall and has a good online shop specialising in bouldering goods: www.barnclimbinggear.co.uk.



War Horse Walk

Meandering around the Meavy

"I have never before in my long and eclectic career been gifted with such an abundance of natural beauty as I experienced filming War Horse on Dartmoor."

- Steven Spielberg

Exploring the high Meavy country on the south west side of Dartmoor is always an enchanting experience. The landscape is rich with beauty, heritage and natural history. Spielberg claimed this extraordinary country was the third character of his blockbuster adaptation of *War Horse*. In his piece in *The Telegraph* the author, Michael Morpurgo, ponders why Dartmoor was chosen. "I'm sure, because it has so much to offer a film-maker: wide skies, craggy tors, boulder-strewn fields; here you can see the farming is hard." He also adds, "It's hardly surprising, then, that so many writers and poets and storytellers have been attracted to this place, from Conan Doyle, in his spine-chiller *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, to Alice Oswald in her celebratory poem *Dart* and now Spielberg."

With all this in mind I was keen to revisit Meavy country and was prompted by a leaflet I picked up describing a walk undertaken by Shaugh Prior Primary School, Dartmoor's education officer Willem Montagne and Aune Head Arts project called "Walk your Ears." Although not immediately in the vicinity of the *War Horse* film's base at Dittsworth, this exploration is at the heart of the scenes captured on film.

The walk starts at Norsworthy Bridge car park and climbs steadily over close cropped grass to the castle like Middleworth Tor. This stands in a dominant position overlooking Burrator Reservoir built in



Sunset over Leather Tor and Sharpitor

1891 to supply Plymouth with its drinking water. Sandeman, the County's water engineer, proposed this as a solution to the leaks of potable water in Drakes Leat, at a cost of £96000

The path continues to climb on up towards Down Tor where boulders and clutter lie strewn about like a natural maize able to absorb and hide away a great number of other visitors. Twenty three tors are identifiable from its summit along with a grandstand view of rolling hills and sweeping downs. To the south west is the sea and beyond the Tamar river are the Cornish heights of Bodmin. The view down over Sheepstor and Burrator has to be one of the great British views and the sunsets in this area are particularly beautiful.

To the north of Down Tor lies

the Newlycombe valley littered with bronze age remnants, tinning activity as well as the derelict 17th century farmsteads. The last inhabitants were cleared out in 1916 after the water corporation seized the watershed in a heavy-handed measure to protect the potable nature of the water feeding into Burrator. It's easy to speculate whether the last men and boys forced off the land at Newlycombe were then sent to the front in France.

Between Down and Combshead Tors the way wanders over the shoulder of Higston Top bypassing its 350 metre long stone row. Ahead lies the bleak and desolate upper watershed of Eylesburrow Common, reputed to be Dartmoor's coldest spot.

The route then drops steeply

past Cuckoo Rock into the tinning area of the Upper Narrator Brook and past the ruins of Combshead Farm, once the home of John Pomeroy and his three arable fields known as Corn Park. In the film of *War Horse* the far fetched scene of Joey ploughing the rough ground at Dittsworth could well have been the reality here.

The way crosses the brook via a hidden clapper bridge in a tiny gorge of willow and ash that shade bubbling pools and little falls of sparkling water. Rocks, tin pits and gerts abound. - its easy to see why this spot was the ideal place to hide smuggled liquor inland from Plymouth.

Down stream it is a delightful woodland walk with the opportunity to spot a pied flycatcher. The well marked path passes the blowing house near Deancombe and follows the good forestry track back to Burrator. The view through the trees on a sunny day towards distant Sharpitor and Leather Tor rising above the conifers is one of my favourites - it reminds me of walking in the Swiss Alps near the little village of Bondo under the Piz Badille.

The last few strides of this lovely walk encounter huge beech trees, planted no doubt by the Pengelly family who inhabited the numerous farms along the now deserted Narrator Brook making this once a veritable tribal valley. Perhaps this was the inspiration for another great story teller - RD Blackmore and his book *Lorna Doone*... ■



FOOT FILE

LENGTH: 5.5km
HEIGHT GAIN: 160m
DIFFICULTY: Whilst this is a straightforward walk in good weather, this is open rough country following an unmarked route for much of its length. The country is prone to impenetrable fog that can descend without warning. The ability to use a map and compass is therefore a key skill necessary to undertake this walk safely.
TIME: To enjoy the walk and a picnic with stops along the way allow 2-3hrs.
REFRESHMENTS AND ACCOMMODATION:
 Royal Oak at Meavy
 Foxtor Cafe and bunkhouse at Princetown

FOOT NOTE

What was in the pack on my back?

We took enough drink and food for a rugged walk with spare energy snacks. We all had a coat with a hood and a spare layer. I took a map and compass, small first aid kit (that contains a space blanket and a tick-tool) plus a mobile phone.
 I had Scarpa walking boots and Anna wore Wellington's that had a vibram walking sole.
 I carried our baby in a very comfortable ERGO baby carrier. www.ergobaby.com
 At the steep descent to Combshead Farm a walking pole would have been useful.



TOP LEFT
 Walking between Combshead Tor and Down Tor

TOP RIGHT
 The secluded beauty of Upper Narrator Brook

ABOVE
 Setting the map using Cuckoo Rock seen on the skyline

Tor Focus

There are three tors worth visiting along the route.

Middleworth Tor and its rock basins, beautiful **Down Tor** and its view of 23 tors and **Combshead Tor**.

The hard core remnant **Cuckoo Rock** is the most enigmatic stone in this area. The bouldering is excellent although for experienced climbers only - see

www.javu.co.uk. According to legendarydartmoor.co.uk. "Distant legend also says that the rock was a place where the pixies used to meet and dance and frolic in the moonlight. In days of old this was also said to be where smuggled liquor was hidden."

To hear the Cuckoos of Deancombe the best time to visit is from the 19th May onwards.



A short, sharp, shock.

Over the years I have had many reasons not to do the CHAGFORD TWO HILLS RACE. Anaphylactic shock from my bees with a day in Moretonhamstead hospital was my most extreme, but last year I was 45 and I was fast running out of excuses...

ABOVE: EYES DOWN FORTWO HILLS, TWO DESCENTS AND ONE NASTY BOG
PHOTOGRAPH JILL PENDLETON

The looming hills of Meldon and Nattadon watch over the ancient stannary town of Chagford with an air of malevolent intent, as they wait throughout the year for the legendary Dartmoor challenge - the Chagford Two Hills race. This was first dreamt up as a commemorative event for the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977 by the Carnival Committee and Chagford Lions Club. They proposed that the lung busting 4 miles with its 1000ft of climbing, would be a fitting tribute to her majesty. For years I thought it was beyond the call of duty. But the truth of the matter is that this well run event is a great race with superb scenery that attracts people from far and wide.

Is it considered a 'rite of passage' for Chagford's young citizens? Maybe. It's difficult not to trip over a tiny-tacker at some point around the course and it's certainly not unusual to be overtaken by some whippet

hardly drawing breath as you stagger on wondering whether the marshals know how to perform CPR. It has certainly become an important tradition of the town and has all the ingredients for the prefect family bankholiday.

Charlotte Goodwin who has done stirring work organising the race for the past 8 years says "A fun atmosphere is at the heart of this local race with all sorts taking part, from children to parents to senior citizens. I can't imagine how they do it, but they do and in all its years the race has only failed to run once because of Foot and Mouth in 2001. We have a good team behind the scenes - all are volunteers - and all the proceeds go to the Chagford Carnival Committee, Chagford Swimming Pool and Devon Air Ambulance."

There will always be a limit of 250 runners to retain the local atmosphere, but the race welcomes runners from all over



Powering over the finish line

to come and visit Chagford and take part.

Bubbling around the race is a rich seam of folklore - Barry Knight was a specialist cross country runner who ran for England and regularly took part and won in the '80s until he had his Olympic hopes scuppered by a tumble on the Two Hills. Brian Lambert is the Chagford running legend who was inspired to take up running marathons after competing in the Two Hills. He has completed every race and reckons a good pair of fell shoes and a steady pace at the start are the ingredients for success.

PHOTOGRAPH ROB PENDLETON

Kate Webber from that famous shop in the centre (Webbers!) of Chagford told me she was asked by her 5 year old son whether she was going to run it last year; "I'd never done it," Kate said "and I was a bit unsure about taking part - but I eventually got round." This is a mild understatement - Kate was the first local female over the finish line and on her first race too...

through the bracken with gorse man traps either side. This made passing others difficult. It is hands-on-thighs steep, which in fell running terms is quite respectable.

Near the top the track levels out and contours back before climbing to the summit. Way down below you can glimpse the tiny sports grounds. It felt like we were actors on a vertical stage - an arena

lad in front of me was dressed in white and seeing stranded runners fall to their knees in the gloom he hesitated; but I was fired up from the descent: "Keep going! Go on!" I shouted. He picked up the pace and splattered out the far side. "Fair is foul, and foul is fair: Hover through the fog and filthy air," seeped through my mind as the spectators looked on aghast at the bog monsters who emerged. "Your mum's going to go mad when she sees your kit mate," I said as we scrambled over the stream and up Nattadon. One day that bog will be dredged....

The final descent of Nattadon is fraught with the risk of a tumbling fall. I ignored the enchanting view over Chagford and the north moor and thought: "think like a rubber ball" and went for it. I arrived at the road in one piece and sprinted towards the common. My legs were feeling the burn and it felt like my heart was going to misfire. "C'mon Baker wipe the snot from your face - you're nearly there!" someone shouted. It was Chaz Mee the retired Chagford Chemist and purveyor of Ventolin - a squirt of which would have been really handy.

I raced through the last hedgeline into the playing fields and vividly remember the shock on seeing the reception. A huge cheering crowd forms a corridor for the runners to sprint along like bullets in the barrel of a gun. Crossing the line your medal is thrust into your hand which I grabbed before staggering off to one side and falling flat on my face. ■



Brian Lambert already back and showered hands out the Trophies. to Kate Webber who scooped first prize in 2011 - her first race!

STATS

A true fell race now in its 35th year
 DISTANCE: 3.45 miles or 5.5km
 HEIGHT GAIN: 1076 feet or 328 metres
 The course is almost completely off road. Should be classified as a bit of a "Willie Whitelaw" (See 1979s home secretary conservative manifesto "short, sharp, shock")
 FASTEST TIME: 23 minutes and 52 seconds
 OLDEST COMPETITOR
 Hugh Woodes-Rogers from Meldon Hall, Chagford - he completed it in May 2010 aged 83.9 years with a time of 83 minutes and 22 seconds.

MORE INFO

2012 DATE AND PRICES

Bank Holiday Monday
 June 4th
 Adults £8 TBC
 Under 16s £4 TBC

ENTRIES

Prior application essential - **no entries on the day.**
 Limited to 250 competitors

Please make cheques payable to Chagford Carnival Committee and send with completed entry form to:
 Charlotte Goodwin
 6 Bretteville Close
 Chagford
 Devon
 TQ13 8DW
 Tel: 01647 432576

Entry forms available from Chagford Pharmacy or Webber and Sons
 Or go to www.chagford-parish.co.uk/two_hills_race.php

FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT

Get a grandstand view of the course from the playing fields. Besides the hilarity of watching 250 people endure unimaginable discomfort for anything up to 90+ minutes, there is a car boot sale, bar-b-que, bouncy castle, cake stalls and other refreshments available.

For the Jubilee celebrations this year there will be additional children's fun races and an adult novelty race - sounds like the Two Hills race all over again!

PHOTOGRAPH JILL PENDLETON



Meldon Hill provides a reality bath to those who sprinted around the start

Two Hills junior winner Franky Sheppard is a veritable 12 year old racing snake. His mum Rachel told me: "I remember the first time he crossed the finishing line side by side with his best mate Kes - a true sign of friendship." This year Franky will not only be in the Two Hills but carrying the torch for this year's Olympics, running between Okehampton and Hatherleigh.

The real troopers though are not just the winners, but all those who turn up and find themselves at the start line. Young and old, fast and slow. There are walkers, runners, crawlers, stumblers, fumlbers and by the finish plenty of numblers. All competitors who cross the finishing line get a medal.

As a mountaineer based in Chagford I felt compelled to do it, so last year I found myself shoulder-to-shoulder knocking knees with 249 other hopefuls waiting for the off. The wait on the start line is agonising - plenty of banter but plenty of thousand yard stares too. The opening scene of *Saving Private Ryan* where the packed landing craft head towards imminent doom sprang to my mind.

The first part of the race is round the playing fields behind the pavilion and through the baying spectators. This should be a warm up but in reality it was a flat out sprint.

The scratched path of loose gravel twisted up Meldon

of gladiators in the sky like some daytime constellation. Chagford's own North Wall of the Eiger. My mind was obviously in metaphor overdrive from too much adrenaline.

Here on this flatter section the tempo increases and sharp elbows fight to try and get past. Then comes the first of two big gnarly descents, complete with grabbing brambles that try and trip you up. My real advantage here was my experience in falling down mountains - plus my Walsh studded fell shoes. These gave me the traction and confidence necessary to charge down this knee-wrecking descent.

Next up was the deep, black, peaty bog on Meldon common that sits quivering expectantly in the cleavage of the race. It is a living beast that feeds on passing runners like some huge carnivorous sundew. The



Chagstock team party their way around the course

PHOTOGRAPH JILL PENDLETON

EARNING YOUR CREAM TEA THE MOUNTAIN BIKE WAY

Tom Dixon - a Scotsman in Devon

It took us sixteen befuddled months after the birth of our daughter to work out what childcare was really for.

Four hundred and ten days before the potential hit us between the eyes; that nursery wasn't just an expensive way to enable us to spend more time working. Instead, mixed with a bit of precious annual leave, it created opportunity for that most rare commodity; a day crashing the mountain bike across Dartmoor in the sun getting muddy. With the wife.

I might have got the order wrong in that sequence. Perhaps that last bit should have read: ...a quality day with the wife on Dartmoor without distraction of the little one. Which we chose to spend on a mountain bike. In the sun. You see? Proof, if you need it, that having children scrambles your brain!

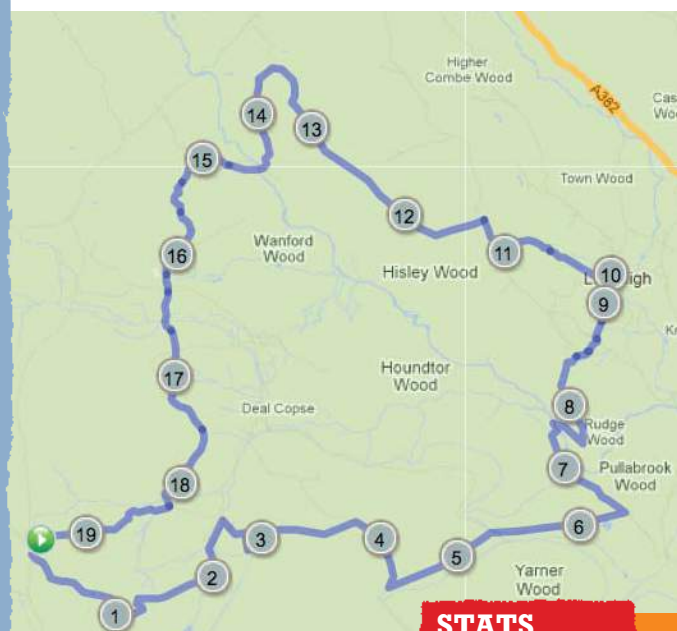
[Those without children can jump in here.]

Hound Tor car park. Dartmoor in the sun, bluebells a carpet of spring jewels, leaves newly unfurled and frenetically green, the winter mud dry and dusted on the paths, and bikes ready. Almost.

"My brakes are making a funny noise," says Zoe.

We found the explanation; no braking at all, disc brakes with no pads left, metal on metal. First set back. Ok, we can deal with that. A quick job, change the pads, front brakes working fine, rear ones seem to have jammed...open. So that's OK then. Always thought brakes were a bit overrated. Let's go!

There is a devious bridleway that cuts SW up over the flanks of Hound Tor before whisking you downhill past Greater and down to cross the Becka Brook. You can miss this part out and instead take the lane, swooping downhill to pick up the off-road route at the bottom. But that would be to miss out a fine start to the day, and a warm-up if there is a chill in the air. Cutting across the open



For more details of Tom's route visit www.mapmyride.com/routes/view/70728170

STATS

START: Car park at Hound Tor
Grid Ref: SX 740 793
DIFFICULTY: Hard
LENGTH: 20 Km
START ELEV: 366 m
MAX ELEV: 390.0 m
ASCENT: 351 m
DESCENT: -398 m

moor, indistinct in places, the bridleway climbs to the first of many fine views. Massed to the left are the jumbled rocks and tors that make up Hound Tor, mecca for climbers, and laid out across the valley is the great mass of moor that stretches from Haytor Rocks to Trendlebere Down and the wooded valley of Lustleigh Cleave. You can't quite see the tea shop in Lustleigh, but have faith, it sits there, out of sight, waiting to refresh hungry and thirsty mountain bikers!

In the near distance is the jagged ridgeback of Greater; as you come level with the tor do take a moment to admire the abandoned but well-preserved medieval village on the left (north), probably abandoned around 1350. Keeping Greater on the right (south side) drop down through a gate on a steep little track that rattles and bumps you down to Becka Brook and an easy ford.

Nicely warmed up, a half on/half off scramble through boulders and trees brings you to fairly open ground as you climb gently before dropping down northwards to Leighon, and the first real ascent. This byway can be rough in places, but soon levels out, high on the hill. Although not technically demanding, it finishes in exhilarating style with expansive views, a just reward for the climb.

Breaking out onto the metalled road offers the chance for some easy cruising in preparation for a cracking single track descent that cuts down the northwest boundary of Yarnor Wood. All cobbles and twisty tree roots, hidden beneath last autumn's leaves, and confined between narrow stone walls, the descent drops you a hundred metres before throwing you back out onto road again. Full use of working brakes would have been good here, but Zoe made short work of it.





As ever on Dartmoor, there are many variations, deviations, extensions that can be made to any route. For hardcore aficionados, make sure you have the essential *Dartmoor for Off-road Cyclists* map in your back pocket – see box-out for details.

Another 1km of metalled road takes you east, with views out north of Trendlebere and the deep wooded valley that hides the River Bovey, to a sharp left (signed “Unsuitable for Motors”) that swoops you down into the shady wooded valley. Deep in the gloom lay a few thick puddles, which allowed us to acquire some real mud splashes, the mark of true mountain bikers.

Through a gate on the right, and a lovely old granite bridge takes you high and dry over the River Bovey and into Bovey Valley Woods, owned and managed by the Woodland Trust. A sharp right at the end of the bridge, and with the April sun beating down, the ascent to Lustleigh begins.

No proper Devon cream tea is ever earned lightly, and the Lustleigh version is no different. With broad traverses the bridleway gains height, April sun creating cool shade beneath scattered stands of trees, beads of sweat refracting the mesmerising colours of bluebells, that lovely smell of spring, damp earth and very early summer. Respite is earned, as the track levels, with a meander around the 16/17th century farm at Higher Hisley before hitting the road and the final climb. At this point Lustleigh Church is

in sight, and as you approach through the very beautiful thatched village you will see Primrose Cottage advertising, in large letters, “Cream Teas”. Perfectly timed. It would be rude to call this merely a refuelling stop. That would do a disservice to what is, in my opinion, a perfect Devon cream tea.

Sitting on the green in Lustleigh, it was a struggle to find the motivation to lift legs over saddles and get going. The only reassurance Zoe had, still operating on only one brake, was that of course we were heading uphill again. And this time it is a bit of a beast. Two hundred metres down the street from the café, take the right turn, engage your lowest gear, and keep your head down for around a kilometre as you climb rapidly out of the village. As you hit the T-junction at the top and turn right onto level road, remember that you are only half way!

Another 250 metres or so, and a bridleway is signed on the left. The narrow, cobbly and enclosed path heads up towards open woodland, at which point the path meanders between tree roots and massive granite boulders. Unless you are training for the Olympics, you will likely find yourself off the bike and pushing at this point! However, it does not take long before you find yourself at Sharpitor, enjoying a well-earned break as you gaze out over Lustleigh Cleave and across to Manaton.

Rolling out along the ridge-line, high above the Cleave, with views in every direction,

heading northwest to Hunter’s Tor, drifts of bluebells lining the path; this is sublime riding. Reluctant to leave, we stopped on the old ramparts of the Iron Age fort that sits just east of the path, and soaked it up.

A gate and straight down a rough track towards Peck Farm restores a bit of speed and concentration to the game, and gets the blood flowing again in preparation for some very fine and fast – and unfortunately final – trail that heads due south to Foxworthy. As mentioned, there are innumerable routes that allow you to extend your trip. At Foxworthy we chose to take the metalled road westwards to pick up the lane that climbs into Manaton, but you could head south east through Lustleigh Cleave before climbing steeply up to Freeland.

As it is, the climb into Manaton is fairly gruelling; it makes a short break almost compulsory on the broad green that lies beside the church!

All that remains now is the final 3km back to the start, with an initial downhill on quiet lanes before the final slog, uphill as ever, to the car below Hound Tor. On a good day the café will be open, and you can reflect on a fine 20km route that takes in some of the best of Dartmoor. The only advice? Make sure your brakes are working! And now we’ve discovered the secret of combining childcare with annual leave, it will not be long before we both find the opportunity to try out another fine Dartmoor adventure! ■

GUIDES MAPS AND INFO

Please see reviews on page 28.

CYCLING WITH MOOR CARE

- Ride only where you are legally permitted to do so.
- Be prepared, with right equipment and clothing including a helmet. Know your equipment and ability and that of others in your group
- Be considerate of other users. Cyclists should use bells or greetings to let others know they are coming - and take care not to scare horses.
- Avoid riding fast on wet ground - tyres can soon turn fragile moorland into mud. please avoid heavy braking and skidding when you off road.
- If you are cycling on road be seen and be prepared for the unexpected on narrow winding lanes. Watch out for stock on roads across open moorland.

MOUNTAIN BIKE HIRE

DEVON CYCLE HIRE

www.devoncyclehire.co.uk
Sourton Down, Okehampton
Devon EX20 4HR

CRS ADVENTURES

www.crsadventures.com
Holne Park, Ashburton
Devon TQ13 7NP

BIKE SHOPS

BIG PEAKS ASHBURTON

www.bigpeaks.com

BIKE SHED CREDITON AND EXETER

www.bikesheduk.com

PARTRIDGE CYCLES KENNFORD

www.partridgecycles.co.uk

OKECYCLES

www.okecycles.co.uk

TAVISTOCK CYCLES

www.tavistockcycles.co.uk

HOLIDAYS AND GUIDING

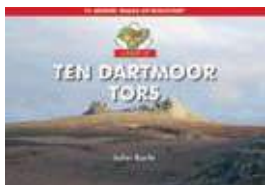
WILDBIKE LTD

www.wildbike.co.uk

BOOK REVIEWS

John Baker examines some recent publications

Boot Up series by John Earle



John has written three gems covering different aspects of Dartmoor, each providing "10

leisure walks of discovery". The descriptions are entertaining and engaging along with good photos and clear maps.

The titles include:

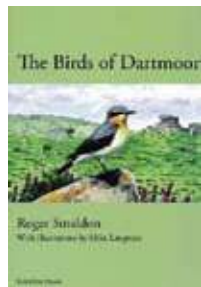
1. *Dartmoor Rivers*
2. *Ten Dartmoor Tors*
3. *Dartmoor's Dites of Magic and Mystery*

I especially liked the latter with its descriptions of the local folklore about ghosts, apparitions, evil spirits, phantoms and fairies.

With all three books John describes 30 walks of varying lengths which takes the reader along pathways to some of Dartmoor's most intriguing places combining exhilarating walks and superb views.

At £4.99 a pop you can't go wrong and they should appeal to young families looking for walks of between 1 and 2hrs

The Birds of Dartmoor by Roger Smaldon £18.95



I found this book in hardback in the Red Sofa in Chagford, a bookshop that sadly no longer exists. Its format and price instantly caught my eye and in an impulsive moment I dug deep and a bought it. Two years later I'm still glad I did.

The book clearly sets out a comprehensive history of the birds of this area, drawing on references from the late eighteenth century to the present day. Relying particularly on records of the Devon Bird Watching & Preservation Society (DBWPS) and the Dartmoor Study Group (DSG) for current information, "it represents the most complete status report to date".

The habitat classifications are interesting and as a casual birdwatcher (I'm more of a nosey climber) I found the chapter Dartmoor Year describing what birds can be found where, month by month to be very useful. There are 19 black and white line drawings, so as a struggling amateur I take out my Collins Bird guide for identification. I regard this as an important reference book that sits on the bookshelf next to my copy of Hemery's *High Dartmoor*.

Available by ordering through the Devon Birdwatching and Preservation's website www.devonbirds.org/node/116

Garden Birds handbook

£5.99 from www.raymears.com



The *Garden Birds Handbook* has been produced in an exciting, spiral-bound notebook format that gives young bird watchers the opportunity to add their own photographs, drawings and

observations to the fact-filled spreads. With stickers to add to pages and a pull-out poster, this is a highly-interactive book. A good identification guide, it is also packed with things to do:

- Make a bird diary with sighting records, sketches and photos
- Apply stickers to show you have spotted each of the featured birds
- Use the pull-out poster for making quick identifications

Suitable for ages 8-12 years

South West Mountain Biking by Nick Cotton and Tom Fenton

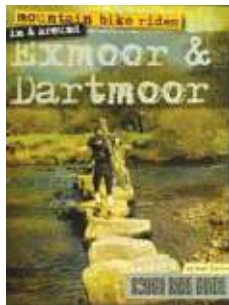
(Pub: Vertebrate Graphics, 2011, ISBN 9781906148263)



Well researched and put together, this handy guide includes ten routes on Dartmoor, alongside coverage of Exmoor and the Quantocks, with excellent, OS-based mapping and action photography.

Mountain Bike Rides in and Around Exmoor and Dartmoor by Max Darkins

(Pub: Rough Ride Guide, 2007, ISBN 9780954882969)



This handy A5 ring-binder design enables you to carry only the route card you need – and with twenty off-road routes described in detail on and around the Moors, there is plenty to go at.

Dartmoor for Cyclists

(Pub: Harvey Map Services, 2009, ISBN 9781851374540)

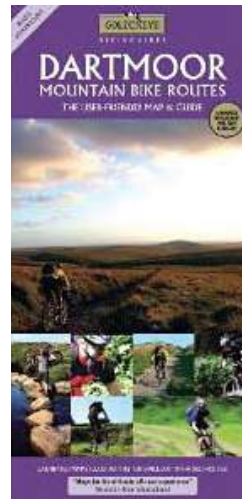


This two-sided waterproof map should be in every cyclist's back pocket, whether mountain-biking or cycle touring on Dartmoor. Produced in conjunction with Dartmoor National Park Authority, one side provides a detailed, 1:40,000 view of all the legal and permitted cycle routes, with gradings.

The flip side offers a larger map taking in the surrounding area with recommended touring routes.

Dartmoor Mountain Bike Routes

by Al Churcher
(Pub: Goldeneye, 2010, ISBN 9781859651940)



With ten well-chosen routes across Dartmoor, making use of rights of way, bridleways and quiet lanes, this map provides a useful resource for planning your day out.

If you know of any books that may be worth reviewing in the *Active Dartmoor* Magazine please email simon@activedartmoor.com

WHAT'S ON

A guide to what's happening on Dartmoor over the next few months

There's a huge range of different activities and events on and around Dartmoor for all age groups over the coming months. We've included a taster to get you going, but for more information contact the following organisations:

Active Dartmoor and the Dartmoor Partnership

There's a lot happening on Dartmoor. You just need to know where to find it. From walking events, festivals and shows, sporting events, music and the arts, there is something for everyone.

For a full list of events go to: www.dartmoor.co.uk

Moorland Guides

Moorland Guides is a newly created small company of existing and qualified guides who, for many years, have been working with the Dartmoor National Park Authority in providing and leading guided walks and also supporting the educational programme by guiding school groups from both this country and abroad. The company offers a range of different walks throughout the year from *War Horse* locations walks to wildlife walks and hight strolls.

www.moorlandguides.co.uk; 07579 969121

National Trust

We found 70 events being offered by the National Trust in the Dartmoor area from Mothers Day events, walks, talks and Bushcraft activities to wildlife and historical themed events.

Go to www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/whats-on/find-an-event/ and type Dartmoor into their search engine.

East Dartmoor National Nature Reserve: Eco-Tots Activities

Join us on our regular session for preschool children. Listen to the story, explore the woods and make a seasonal craft to take home.

Meet at Yarnor Wood car park. 01626 832330

Wild Woods and Willow

Wildcraft and nature awareness for young people Linda, Dan and Charlie run an active calendar for 2012 in some really wild spots! Birthday adventures a speciality.

Go to www.wildwoodswillow.org.uk/index.html for more info.

Adventure Okehampton for Adventurous Activities

Adventure Okehampton is a specialist adventure company based at Okehampton YHA, and has been providing adventure activities for individuals and groups of all ages for the last 15 years.

www.adventureokehampton.com 01837 53916

Wildwise

Promoting environmental awareness through education and training

www.wildwise.co.uk; 01803 868269

MARCH PICKS

"War Horse" locations walk with Paul Rendell

(01/03/2012)

Tel: 01837 54727

DNPA & Navigation - Beginner's Guide to Map and Compass

(11/03/2012)

01822 890414

Eco Tots Spring Things!

(21/03/2012)

Tel: 01626 832330

APRIL PICKS

Active Dartmoor week

31 March – 8 April 2012

Activities to try include:

- Moorland Guides Open Day
- One Day Horse Riding Challenge with Elaine Prior
- Bake Off with Ashburton Cookery School
- Dare Devil High Adventures with River Dart Country Park
- Fishing competition with South West Lakes Trust
- Marble Run Challenge with House of Marbles

Tuesday 3 April from 10am Guided walks with Moorland Guides

If you like to get out on the moor and go for a hike, come along to the Moorland Guides' launch day at Postbridge, right in the heart of the moor. Starting at 10am, there will be two-hour walks taking place

every hour. Free to those who make a small donation to Dartmoor Rescue. To book, email jess@discoverdartmoor.com, call 07579 969121 or just turn up on the day.

Thursday 5 April from 11am **Geocaching Challenge with Dartmoor National Park Authority** Starting from the Haytor Visitor Centre, there will be introductions to geocaching at 11am, 12pm, 1pm and 3pm for a small donation to the Active Dartmoor charities. Dartmoor Rangers will be on hand to explain the art of geocaching. To book contact rdrysdale@dartmoor-npa.org or call 01626 831 003.

Saturday 7 April, 11am-4pm **Big Oke Abseil with Adventure Okehampton** Take the train to the Big Oke Abseil from Meldon (Okehampton) viaduct to the Okement River. Come as a group and raise money for your chosen charity, or enter as an individual and challenge yourself. To book your place email: activities@adventureokehampton.com or call 0844 2930556.

Sunday 8 April, **The Brentor 2 Stage Bike Race** If you are a cycling enthusiast and want a challenge that might just test your fitness, this is the race for you. What better way to spend a Sunday than cycling over the hills of Dartmoor? The event starts at 10am from Brentor Village Hall with a one lap time trial (approx. five miles) at which riders are set off at one minute intervals. At 12.30pm there will be a 10-lap race (approx. 50 miles) where everyone will start together.

The race is open to both men and women. Entrants must be 16 and over and be British Cycling registered (this can be done for free if you are already a member of a cycling club. You will need to hold a race licence or can purchase a day licence for £10. For entry and further information, please visit www.rutrainingtoday.co.uk/the-brentor-2-stage-race

If you would like further information about any of these events or want to get involved, please contact Keith Green on 01837 52200

Eco-Tots Woodland Wonders

(18/04/2012)

Tel: 01626 832330

Devon Dirt 2012

56km cycle ride including some tough off-road sections.

Tel: 01626 367977 / 07980 241245

MAY PICKS

Eco Tots Hunt for the Pied Fly!

(16/05/2012)

Tel: 01626 832330

Heart of Dartmoor Cycle Challenge

(12/05/2012)

Tel: 01392 279244

Castle Drogo Nightjar Walk

(25/05/2012)

Tel: 01647 433306

Wildwise offers Other Voices - bird language

26/05/2012 - 27/05/2012

Tel: 01803 868269 / 0781 349 2825

JUNE PICKS

Dartmoor Discovery Ultra Marathon

(09/06/2012)

Tel: 01803 528648

Eco Tots Summer Fun

(13/06/2012)

Tel: 01626 832330

Adventure Okehampton Discover Rock Climbing Course

2 day climbing course

(15/06/2012 - 17/06/2012)

Tel: 01837 53916

JULY PICKS

Eco-Tots Teddy Bears Picnic

(18/07/2012)

Tel: 01626 832330

Haytor Hella

(21/07/2012)

Six miles of breathtaking off-road running

www.teignbridgetrotters.co.uk

GPS: Learn to Navigate the Modern Way

(23/07/2012)

Tel: 07579 969121

If you have an event that you would like to publicise in Active Dartmoor please email simon@activedartmoor.com
Thinking of organising an event on Dartmoor? Please contact the Dartmoor National Park Access and Recreation team on 01626 832093

DIRECTORY

Our useful list of activity providers based on and around Dartmoor

ADVENTURE OKEHAMPTON

Adventure Sports, Cycling and Mountain Biking, Canoeing, Orienteering, Adventure Sport Centre. Okehampton 01837 53916

BLACKADON BARN COTTAGES

Walking, Ivybridge 01752 897034

BOVEY TRACEY GOLF CENTRE

Golf. Bovey Tracey 01626 836464

CRS ADVENTURES/DART RIVER ADVENTURES

Adventure Sports, Boating and Canoeing, Climbing and Mountaineering, Extreme Watersports, Outdoor Activity/ Pursuit Centre. Ashburton 01364 653444 01364 652511

DART ROCK CLIMBING CENTRE

Adventure Sports, Climbing and Mountaineering, Adventure Sports Centre. Buckfastleigh 01364 644499

DARTMOOR DRIVING

Horse Riding. Ashburton 01364 631438

DARTMOOR NATURE TOURS

Walking, Safari Tours. Bovey Tracey 07858 421148

DARTMOOR PONY HERITAGE TRUST

Animal collection, heritage/ visitor centre, event venue, nature trail. 01626 355314 07890 372 709

DEVON CYCLE HIRE

Cycling and Mountain Biking. Sourton 01837 861141

IBEX OUTDOOR

Adventure Sports, Boating and Canoeing, Climbing and Mountaineering, Walking, Canoeing, Adventure Sport Centre, Outdoor Activity/ Pursuit Centre. Ivybridge 07971497531 01752 837082

RIVER DART ADVENTURES

Adventure Sports, Fishing, Boating and Canoeing, Swimming Pool, Walking. Ashburton 01364 652511

ROADFORD LAKE

Okehampton 01566 784859



SHILSTONE ROCKS STUD & RIDING CENTRE

Tailored hacks for all abilities. A great way to enjoy Dartmoor. 01364 621281

SOUTH WEST LAKES TRUST

Fishing, Boating and Canoeing, Walking, Multi-Activity Centres, Wind Surfing, Outdoor Activity/ Pursuit Centre 01566 778503

SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE

Adventure Sports, Cycling and Mountain Biking, Climbing and Mountaineering, Walking, Multi-Activity Centres, Canoeing, Orienteering, Activity Centre. Yelverton 01822 880277

THE DARTMOOR EXPEDITION CENTRE

Offers year round bunkhouse accommodation that is simple and robust. Information www.dartmoorbase.co.uk 01364 621249

THE DARTMOOR CENTRE

Group Accommodation and Outdoor Activities Princetown 01822 890761

TREASURE TRAILS

Cycling and Mountain Biking, Walking. Devon 07960 630900

TREE SURFERS

Adventure Sports. Tavistock 01822 833409

WEEK FARM

Fishing/Fishery. Okehampton 01837 861221

WINGSTONE FARM

Horse Riding. Manaton 01647 221215

WRANGATON GOLF CLUB

Wrangaton 01364 73229

www.dartmoor-riding.com

Shilstone Rocks Stud & Riding Centre



Ride in "War Horse" country
Beautiful, quiet
and un-spoilt

Tailored hacks for all
abilities A great way to
enjoy Dartmoor

Tel: 01364 621281

The Carpenters Arms

A delightful traditional country pub -
located a few minutes from Haytor
in the lovely Dartmoor village of Ilsington.



• Families • Dogs • Horses
• Muddy boots and wet coats are all welcome!



Traditional Sunday Roast.
Home cooked and locally sourced menu with
childrens portions available.
A good range of well kept real ales,
beers, ciders and wines.
Ample parking in the village

Ilsington, Haytor, Devon TQ13 9RG
01364 661629 www.carpentersilsington.co.uk

Lowertown Farm

Bed and Breakfast Accommodation

Farmhouse accommodation
on Dartmoor.
Perfect for walkers, climbers, horse riders
and paddlers of the River Dart.
Quality local pubs nearby,
full traditional English breakfast.
Fresh eggs from our chickens and ducks
Great guest reviews,
online bookings through our website.
Guest sitting room with log burner.

Putting Dartmoor First award
Holiday with your horse!
Fantastic riding through woodland,
quiet lanes and open common
www.lowertownfarmdartmoor.co.uk
01364 631034

Fox Tor Cafe

Licensed Cafe Off-Licence Bunkhouse

We provide bunkhouse accommodation and have
the only off-licence in Princetown. We welcome
everyone in our cafe from walkers with dirty boots
to businessmen in need of our free WiFi. We also
welcome well behaved dogs on a lead! We have an
open fire as well as a woodburner!



Two Bridges Road, Princetown PL20 6QS
01822 890 238 foxtorcafe.com

'MEADOWLEA' GUEST HOUSE



You're sure of a warm welcome from
Mark & Lesley Poole

65 Station Road Okehampton Devon EX20 1EA
Tel: 01837 53200
meadowleaguesthouse@tiscali.co.uk
www.meadowleaguesthouse.co.uk

CAOB ROCK Princetown



Former railwayman's cottage on the edge of
Princetown. Superb views across the Moor.
Well equipped and sympathetically furnished.
Bring your boots or bike and discover Dartmoor
from the front door.

.....
2 Bedrooms (sleeps 4) Parking, linen and
heating included. Visit Britain 3 star self
catering. Dartmoor Partnership accredited.
From £300/pw. Short breaks from £50/pn
Open all year

David & Monika Bright Tel: 01392 851345
herpoldtbright@aol.com
www.escapetoprincetown.co.uk

The Royal Oak Inn



The Royal Oak at Meavy is in an idyllic
location next to the village green. If
character is what you want then you could
find no better place!

Food is served seven days a week, home
cooked, locally sourced.
Walking groups welcome... Muddy boots
and muddy paws welcome in the bar!

Meavy, Dartmoor, Devon PL20 6PJ
Tel. 01822 852994 Email. sjearp@aol.com
www.royaloakinn.org.uk

To advertise in Active Dartmoor call Susie on
01392 201227 or email: info@zaramedia.co.uk

active

LIVE YOUR LIFE TO THE FULL OUTDOORS

DARTMOOR

Get your heart pumping, get out on the moor. It's your Dartmoor. To find out more, visit www.dartmoor.co.uk

Download walks and cycle trails, book a holiday, hire kit, find Michelin Star restaurants, savour the best local food, listen to birdsong, discover local events, subscribe to Active Dartmoor magazine, learn about Dartmoor ponies, enter competitions, upload your images, write a review, plan your next trip. **Just do.**

Get right to the heart of Dartmoor with the new Dartmoor iPhone app

Find out what to do, where to stay, what to see, all at your fingertips

Geolocating technology provides slick mapping, showing exactly where you are in relation to nearby hotels, activities, attractions, shops, events and more. Quickly obtain information including prices, opening times, descriptions and high resolution images. Use the favourites option to create your own Dartmoor itinerary. Updated regularly, this is the must-have app to Dartmoor National Park for first-time visitors and clued-up locals alike.



dartmoor.co.uk



Quay climbing centre

Climbing for everyone...

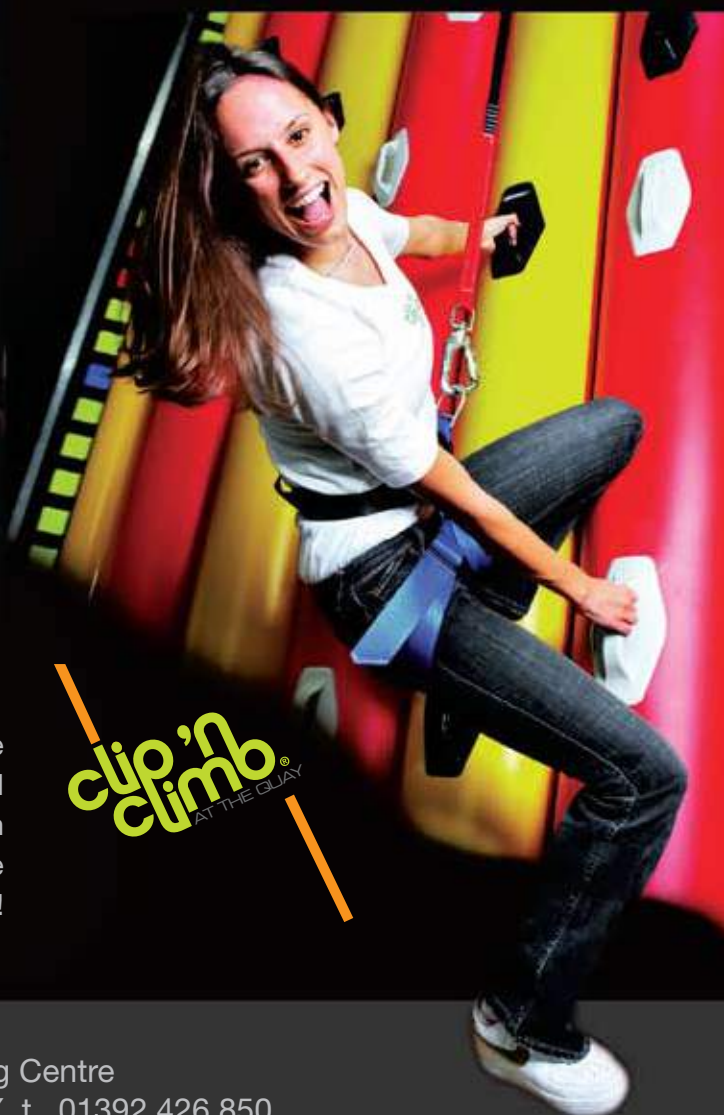
Located in the heart of Exeter

The newest climbing wall in the South West offers something for all abilities, from beginners to experienced climbers, and we have two great boulder caves for bouldering fanatics. Whatever the weather you can experience some of the thrill of the outdoors indoors at the Quay, or just enjoy the view of the action from our Workshop Cafe!



Who, dares...climbs!

The UK's first Clip 'n Climb centre opens at the Quay in Autumn 2011. Challenge yourself and your friends on a circuit of themed climbs with inflatable walls, speed races, moving parts and the ultimate test – the Leap of Faith!



**clip'n
climb**
AT THE QUAY

The Quay Climbing Centre
Haven Road, Exeter, EX2 8AX t. 01392 426 850
www.quayclimbingcentre.co.uk www.clipnclimbexeter.co.uk