

Cosdon and the River Taw

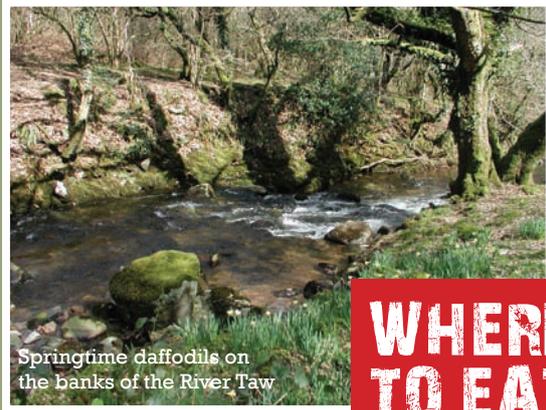
Sue Viccars explores around Belstone



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



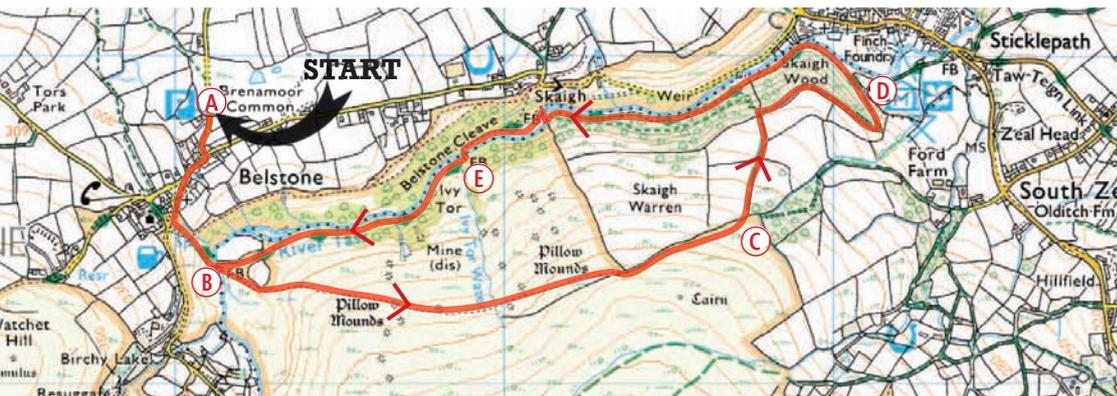
Springtime daffodils on the banks of the River Taw

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



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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

