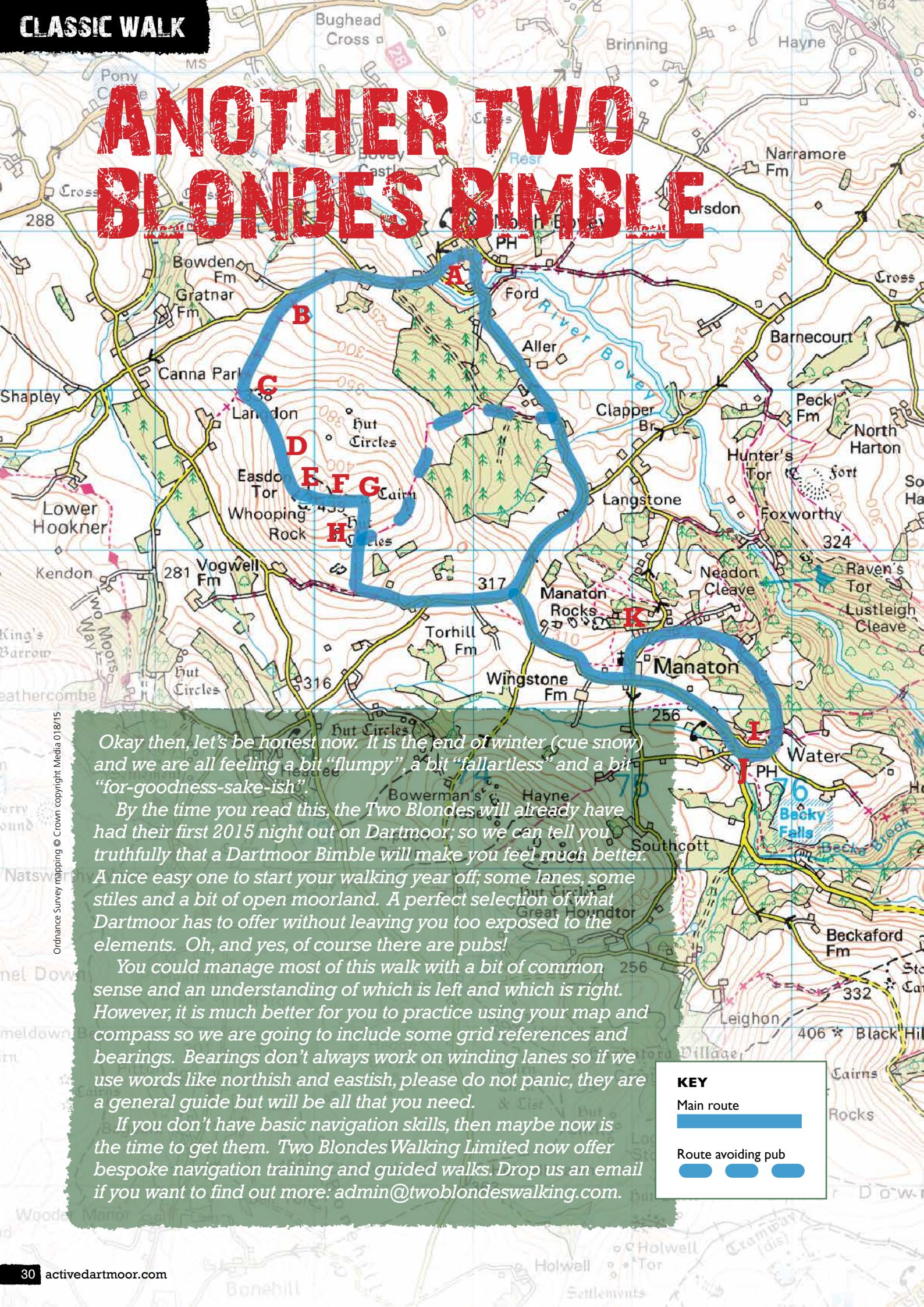


ANOTHER TWO BLONDES BIMBLE



Okay then, let's be honest now. It is the end of winter (cue snow) and we are all feeling a bit "flumpy", a bit "fallartless" and a bit "for-goddness-sake-ish".

By the time you read this, the Two Blondes will already have had their first 2015 night out on Dartmoor; so we can tell you truthfully that a Dartmoor Bimble will make you feel much better. A nice easy one to start your walking year off; some lanes, some stiles and a bit of open moorland. A perfect selection of what Dartmoor has to offer without leaving you too exposed to the elements. Oh, and yes, of course there are pubs!

You could manage most of this walk with a bit of common sense and an understanding of which is left and which is right. However, it is much better for you to practice using your map and compass so we are going to include some grid references and bearings. Bearings don't always work on winding lanes so if we use words like northish and eastish, please do not panic, they are a general guide but will be all that you need.

If you don't have basic navigation skills, then maybe now is the time to get them. Two Blondes Walking Limited now offer bespoke navigation training and guided walks. Drop us an email if you want to find out more: admin@twoblondeswalking.com.

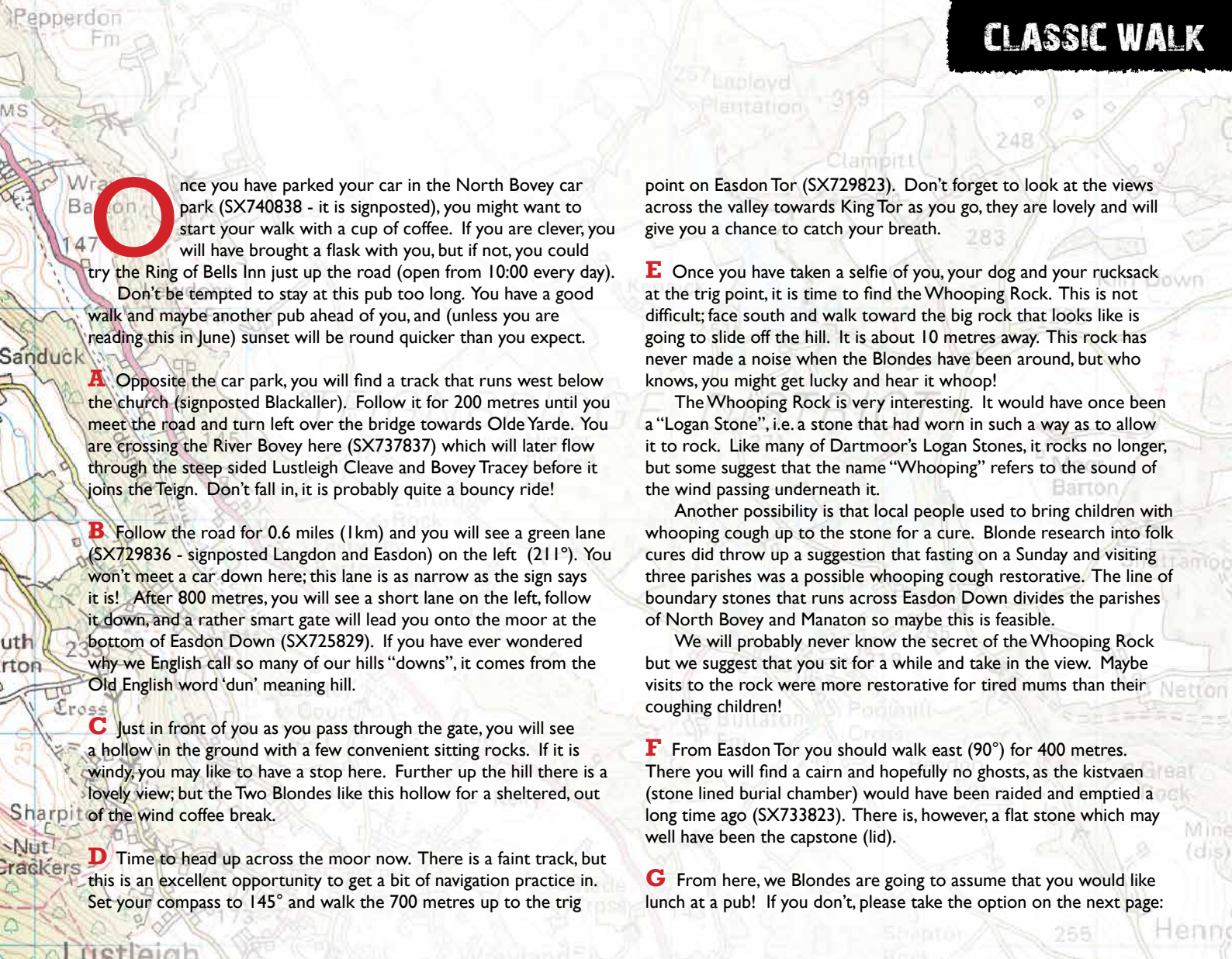
KEY

Main route



Route avoiding pub





Once you have parked your car in the North Bovey car park (SX740838 - it is signposted), you might want to start your walk with a cup of coffee. If you are clever, you will have brought a flask with you, but if not, you could try the Ring of Bells Inn just up the road (open from 10:00 every day).

Don't be tempted to stay at this pub too long. You have a good walk and maybe another pub ahead of you, and (unless you are reading this in June) sunset will be round quicker than you expect.

A Opposite the car park, you will find a track that runs west below the church (signposted Blackaller). Follow it for 200 metres until you meet the road and turn left over the bridge towards Olde Yarde. You are crossing the River Bovey here (SX737837) which will later flow through the steep sided Lustleigh Cleave and Bovey Tracey before it joins the Teign. Don't fall in, it is probably quite a bouncy ride!

B Follow the road for 0.6 miles (1km) and you will see a green lane (SX729836 - signposted Langdon and Easdon) on the left (211°). You won't meet a car down here; this lane is as narrow as the sign says it is! After 800 metres, you will see a short lane on the left, follow it down, and a rather smart gate will lead you onto the moor at the bottom of Easdon Down (SX725829). If you have ever wondered why we English call so many of our hills "downs", it comes from the Old English word 'dun' meaning hill.

C Just in front of you as you pass through the gate, you will see a hollow in the ground with a few convenient sitting rocks. If it is windy, you may like to have a stop here. Further up the hill there is a lovely view; but the Two Blondes like this hollow for a sheltered, out of the wind coffee break.

D Time to head up across the moor now. There is a faint track, but this is an excellent opportunity to get a bit of navigation practice in. Set your compass to 145° and walk the 700 metres up to the trig

point on Easdon Tor (SX729823). Don't forget to look at the views across the valley towards King Tor as you go, they are lovely and will give you a chance to catch your breath.

E Once you have taken a selfie of you, your dog and your rucksack at the trig point, it is time to find the Whooping Rock. This is not difficult; face south and walk toward the big rock that looks like is going to slide off the hill. It is about 10 metres away. This rock has never made a noise when the Blondes have been around, but who knows, you might get lucky and hear it whoop!

The Whooping Rock is very interesting. It would have once been a "Logan Stone", i.e. a stone that had worn in such a way as to allow it to rock. Like many of Dartmoor's Logan Stones, it rocks no longer, but some suggest that the name "Whooping" refers to the sound of the wind passing underneath it.

Another possibility is that local people used to bring children with whooping cough up to the stone for a cure. Blonde research into folk cures did throw up a suggestion that fasting on a Sunday and visiting three parishes was a possible whooping cough restorative. The line of boundary stones that runs across Easdon Down divides the parishes of North Bovey and Manaton so maybe this is feasible.

We will probably never know the secret of the Whooping Rock but we suggest that you sit for a while and take in the view. Maybe visits to the rock were more restorative for tired mums than their coughing children!

F From Easdon Tor you should walk east (90°) for 400 metres. There you will find a cairn and hopefully no ghosts, as the kistvaen (stone lined burial chamber) would have been raided and emptied a long time ago (SX733823). There is, however, a flat stone which may well have been the capstone (lid).

G From here, we Blondes are going to assume that you would like lunch at a pub! If you don't, please take the option on the next page:



PHOTOGRAPH © TWOBLONDES

No pub option: There is a stone wall 200 metres due south of you. You should head down towards it. On the way, you might see a tall rock stack. It is not marked on the OS map but is called "Figgie Daniel". We would love to tell you why it is called that but we don't know. Say hello to him for us.

When you reach the wall, you need to walk along it heading eastish until you come to the end of it. From there, you should follow a path which runs north (9°) for 600 metres. There are a few bridleway signs to guide you.

The bridleway then turns eastish again (82°) and goes straight down the hill through a magical area of moss covered boulders, conifers and native trees. Follow the bridleway all the way down for 800 metres to the lane near to Luckdon (SX745827). From there a walk of about 0.6 miles (1km) down and then up the lane, in a northwestish (330°) direction will take you back across the River Bovey (SX740836) to your car.

H To find the pub (you must be hungry by now), you will need to go to Manaton. Head south from the cairn and walk downhill for 600 metres, following the wall boundary until you meet the green lane (SX732817). Head east along the lane until you reach Barracott (300 metres). From here, follow the lane down to Langstone Cross. Then take a right turn and head along the lane southeastish for 0.6 miles (1km) until you reach Manaton (SX750811).

Did we say that the pub was in Manaton? Well it is, but you are not there yet. If you like churchyards, the one at Manaton is worth some exploration. You will pass the church again later if you feel an urgent need to get to your lunch. If you do explore, be sure to take a look at the cross that stands by the little gate on the west side of the church. It looks like it has been there forever and is definitely old, but the story goes that the vicar of the parish so intensely disliked the practice of carrying a coffin three times around the cross before burial, that he "disposed" of it. The cross that is now in situ was found much later on, but didn't fit the hole that had been left by the original cross. Another Dartmoor mystery and yet another Dartmoor cross that has a story to tell.

I Anyway, enough graveyards. Time for a warm welcome and some lunch (you can choose whether or not it is a liquid one). The Kestor Inn is open from 12:00 to 14:00 for lunch (12:00 to 16:00 for Sunday carvery). It offers a warm welcome and serves a wide variety of lovely food. We Blondes usually opt for their homemade soup which is always delicious. There is even a little shop which stocks maps and Dartmoor walking books (and maybe a Blonde Bimbles book one day!)

J Once you have warmed up, eaten your fill and maybe imbibed a Dartmoor based beverage, it is time to head off again. We Blondes don't like to make things too easy after lunch, so we are going to take you off road again. As you come out of the pub, turn left and then left again into a lane that will take you northeastish (72°) and down into Letchole Plantation (SX757810). This lane veers left after 250 metres and you will follow the track on a bearing of 330°. If you look carefully, you will see the grass topped buildings of the East Dartmoor National Nature Reserve. After 900 metres, you will cross a stream (ignore the track to the right just before the stream). Keep going up your track until you reach a road (600 metres).

K Turn left at the road and after 200 metres (southish), you will find yourself back at the Manaton crossroads (near the church). At these crossroads, turn right and head back along the lane for 0.6 miles (1km) to Langstone Cross (SX742817). Then it is a right turn and another kilometre down to Langstone itself (36°). At Langstone, take a left turn and follow the lane down through Luckdon and Aller Mill (325°). Cross the River Bovey (SX740836) and then a few short strides will take you up to your car (distance from Langstone to North Bovey 0.9 miles (1.5km)).

There you go. We Blondes told you that you would feel better after a Bimble. You don't feel better? Your legs and back are aching? Well go home and have a hot bath, we promise that you will feel completely excellent after that!

Family Option

Whilst the lanes in this walk are not very busy, they do have cars on them. Please take care if you have young children with you. High visibility vests and tops are available for youngsters and a useful addition to their walking kit. This is a lovely walk for children because it has all sorts of things to climb on, explore and look at. If you want a quick walk with just one section of lane, we recommend a trip from North Bovey up to the Whooping Rock (see sections A-E of our Bimble) and a return the same way. You can tell the youngsters that it is downhill all the way home!

Navigation Notes

Navigation across open moorland can sometimes be easier than on tracks and lanes. Lanes feel safe and can easily lead you in the wrong direction or too far in the right direction.

One trick is to use your compass to make sure that you are heading the right way. Set the bearing on your compass to the one suggested in our Bimble. Point your compass away from you and turn you and the compass around until the red north arrows line up. You should now be facing the right way.

Another trick is to note how long each section of your route should take you. If you walk for longer than that time, then you need to stop and think about where you are. Have you missed a turning? Do you need to go back and check? Were you in the right place to start with? If in doubt, go back to your last known point.

Compasses are great tools and, once you have practiced using one, you will be surprised by how often you wish you had one with you.

FOOT FILE

LENGTH: Without detour to Manaton pub 4 miles (6.5km).
With detour 7.5 miles (12km)

TIME: Without detour to Manaton pub – 2 hours.
With detour – 4 hours

START/FINISH: North Bovey car park SX 740838

TERRAIN: Mixed terrain; green lanes (often muddy but usually pretty), a short open moorland section and some country road walking. Tracks can be muddy and the walk includes a number of stiles

MAPS: OS Explorer OL28 Dartmoor

PUBLIC TRANSPORT: Public transport is limited. Turner's Tours offer a once a week service from Newton Abbot on a Wednesday. Route number 671 – Newton Abbot to Okehampton

PARKING: North Bovey car park. No charge

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS: Bovey Castle (bring several credit cards). Moretonhampstead (for quirky shopping)

Want to share your favourite walk with readers?

If you have a particular walk that you think other readers would enjoy and have some good images to go with it we'd like to hear from you. Email anna@activedartmoor.com with your idea.