

## Walk No. 43 A Walk Across the Walkham

The West Devon Way walking route links Plymouth and Okehampton, much of the route following the western edge of Dartmoor. This walk follows a length of the West Devon Way between Yelverton and Tavistock. This length begins on a route parallel to the valley of the River Walkham as it descends off Dartmoor, before crossing the river at the picturesque Double Waters, where the Walkham meets the Tavy. The walk then climbs across West Down, another open area of semi-moorland, before descending into Tavistock.

This walk is designed as a one-way trip along the West Devon Way, using the regular bus service between Tavistock and Yelverton to reach the start.

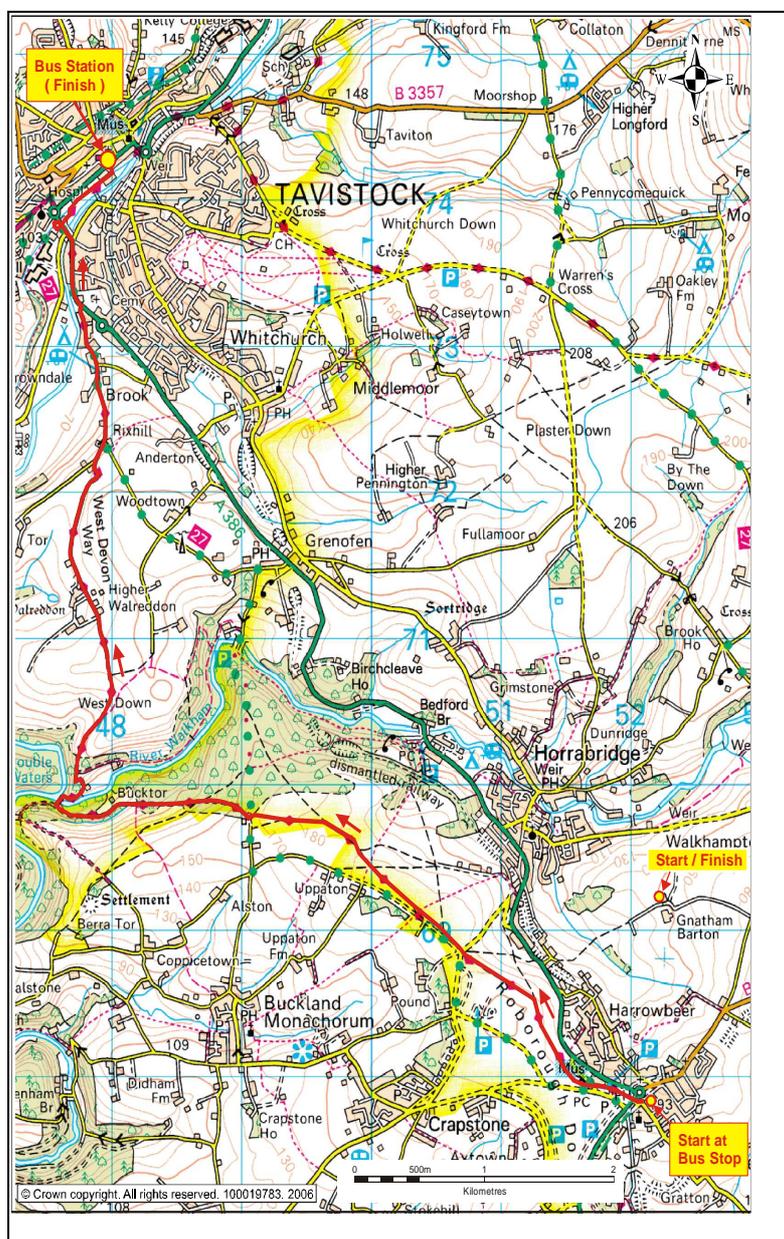
### Fact File

Tavistock is served by regular bus services to and from Plymouth, Okehampton, Torrington, Bideford and Barnstaple. There are also less frequent services to and from Princetown, Moretonhampstead and Exeter as well as Bere Alston. For timetable details call Traveline on 0870 608 2 608 or visit [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk). Car parking is plentiful in Tavistock.

**Walk Length:** 11 km/7 miles: no stiles; one climb of 100m/330 ft.

### Facilities:

Tavistock has all facilities; Yelverton has shops, pub, buses and car parks. There are no facilities along the walk.



## The Walk

All buses depart from Tavistock from the bus station in Plymouth Road. For this walk take a Plymouth-bound bus and alight at the main bus stop in Yelverton.

Yelverton is a relatively new settlement, largely owing its existence to its station on the Great Western Railway. This was built in 1859 and closed, with the rest of the local railway, as part of the Beeching cuts in the 1960's. Prior to the station, there was little more than a farm here.

Get off the bus at the main Yelverton stop, climb the steps behind the bus shelter and turn left, round the outside of the roundabout, towards the bollards in the main road. Cross the road here, using the central reservation with the Buckland Abbey sign. Walk along the grassy path ahead towards a children's play area. Pass this and continue on the tarmac path ahead to the car park.

Go into the car park and head for the narrow tarmac path straight ahead, signed with a West Devon Way disc. Follow this alongside the wooden fence then go through the kissing-gate onto the open down.

This is Roborough Down, a low moorland plateau lying a little apart from the main mass of Dartmoor. It was used as a Second World War airfield and the remains of grass-banked Spitfire shelters remain.

Continue ahead to the end of the fence then bear right, down a bank, and follow the broad grassy path parallel to a fence on the right.

This next length can be confusing, as there are a number of paths crossing Roborough Down. Follow the directions carefully.

The broad path continues through bracken, thorn and rowan, rises slightly to the left, then continues again in its original direction. Just as it then starts to descend look out for a fork with a slightly narrower path branching left, and take this path. This itself then almost immediately forks. Keep right here.

This length gives superb views of the south west side of Dartmoor. To the left of the main body of the moor can be seen the distinctive outline of Brentor Church on its conical hill. Walkers continuing on the West Devon Way beyond Tavistock would pass close to this landmark on their way to Okehampton.

Immediately below the path on the right can be seen the village of Horrabridge and the Walkham Valley.

The grassy way continues ahead, passing two benches on the way, to arrive at a junction of minor roads. Cross over and follow the road ahead, signed towards Long Ash. Bear slightly right onto the open land and continue ahead, still keeping parallel to the road.

As the route continues over an open area sometimes used as a football field, the end of our walk at Tavistock will be seen ahead and to the right.

Keep ahead and parallel to the road, eventually to reach a hedge bank and fence which leaves the road at right angles. Go to the right hand end of this bank and then continue onwards in your original direction, alongside another bank and past a 'No Unauthorised Vehicles' sign. Follow this broad grassy path as it bears away from the bank, only to rejoin it a little later. Now stay on the broad path ahead and still parallel to the bank until it arrives at a good track at a parking area. Turn right down this track, following it as it bears left past the 'No Vehicles' sign.

A good view opens out of the Walkham Valley with West Down on the opposite side. Geographically West Down is another outlier of Dartmoor, although it is not included within the National Park. Beyond West Down can be seen the woodland which marks the line of the Tavy Valley.

Follow the well-surfaced track down into the Walkham Valley, the track becoming a little rougher as it nears the bottom.

As the sound of running water becomes obvious, look over to the right as the Walkham comes into view. Look out for the path leaving to the right and back to the footbridge crossing the Walkham.

A little further on are the remains of an old copper mine, the wonderfully named Virtuous Lady Mine. Some of the spoil heaps are on the left. The track we have been following would have been a main access for this mine.

Turn right onto the minor path, go down to the river and cross the footbridge over the Walkham.

This picturesque spot is Double Waters, the meeting place of the Walkham with the Tavy, which is the river on the left. Dippers and grey wagtails breed here, and the rivers are used by otters.

Cross the bridge and bear left, next to the Tavy, then almost immediately bear right, through a narrow cleft in the rocks. Follow this path alongside the river (the Walkham again), continuing uphill away from the river as the path becomes a track. This rises fairly steeply to a junction.

**Take the track to the left and continue rising, though less steeply, over open moorland.**

On reaching the top, looking back gives a good view of the outline of the tree-clad river valleys, the now-combined Tavy and Walkham going away to the right.

West Down is an area of acidic grassland important for its butterflies, including nationally important populations of the high brown fritillary and the pearl bordered fritillary.

**Continue on the track across West Down. This leads to a gate. Go through and follow the lane ahead.**

A little way down the lane on the left is Walreddon Farm. The present buildings date to Tudor times and the location is first mentioned in 1329. However, the name is from the Saxon for "community of Britons", indicating that a Celtic settlement existed here after the Anglo-Saxons had colonised most of the surrounding area.

As the land descends, good views open up over Tavistock, the town laid out ahead with Brentor behind. More immediately on the left, over the Tavy Valley, can be seen the stone buildings of Crowndale Farm, said to be the birthplace of Sir Francis Drake.

**Follow the lane to the main road at the bottom and go left, along the roadside path.**

Notice the attractive terraces of cottages on the left, some of them dated. These were miners' cottages, built by the Duke of Bedford who owned all the land and mines around during the 19th Century, when Tavistock was a major mining centre. The cottages date from the 1840's and 50's.

**Follow the main road until you see signs for the pedestrian subway. Turn left and left again to pass through the subway under the main road. In the park turn left along the tarmac path then, at the junction, go right alongside the waterway.**

The waterway is the Tavistock Canal. This was built between 1803 and 1817 to take minerals from the mines which had been collected at Tavistock to the river port at Morwellham. Much of the canal was constructed by French prisoners of war. The total length of the canal was 4 miles/6.5 km and included a tunnel some 1.5 miles/2.5 km long. The first 2.5 miles/4 km from Tavistock makes a pleasant walk.

**Keep on past the Meadowlands Swimming Pool to the Wharf.**

As the name suggests, this was the main wharf for loading the mined ore onto the canal. It is now a much-used Community and Arts Centre.

**Now continue ahead for the main car park, or turn left to return to the bus station.**

#### Further Information

An information pack on the West Devon Way is available from local Tourist Information Centres price £3. It may also be obtained from the Discover Devon Information Service, Westacott Road, Barnstaple, EX32 8YR, telephone 0870 608 5531, price £4.50 including postage and packing (quote reference DP 16; cheques payable to Devon County Council).

For information on the wider network of walking routes in Devon obtain the free leaflet "Discover Devon - Walking" from local Tourist Information Centres or from the address above. Alternatively, visit the website [www.discoverdevon.com](http://www.discoverdevon.com) which has all the information and an order form.

OS Maps for this walk:

Landranger (1:50,000 scale) No. 201 Plymouth and Launceston  
Explorer (1:25,000 scale) No. 108 Lower Tamar Valley