



Dartmoor

Bagga Tor

This walk takes out of a secret valley tucked away close to the amazing rock-strewn Tavy Cleave which, in its own right, is one of the seven-wonders of the Westcountry. As such, the Cleave is left remarkably unvisited. But it 's little neighbour to the east receives barely a walker a decade, let alone a year...

The valley that plays host to Baggator Brook is not easy to reach, it's very much tucked away from the rest of the world and, looking at the general topography of the place, you can't imagine why anyone but the farmer should have reason to go there.

It does however have one landmark which you can see from the busy Tavistock-Okehampton road. Next time you're travelling along it just north of Mary Tavy, look east into the lonely area which lurks under the great bastions of West Dartmoor and you will see a kind of patchwork vale lurking rather scenically under the moors. Sweep your gaze north to south around the edges of the vale and - more-or-less in the centre of the amphitheatre - you will see a circular-shaped wood perched betwixt the grass of the lowlands and the heather of the uplands.

It has a rather mystical air about it, but is rather prosaically called South Common Plantation. It is the visual key that unlocks the secret world of Bagga Tor.

Getting to the spot is not easy. You must drive up miles of narrow lane. It's best reached from Peter Tavy - travel north out of the village along the valley road through Cudlipptown, and eventually branch right for Wapsworthly.

Carry on through that lonesome hamlet to ascend towards Brousentor Farm. You will at last come to a gate that issues upon open moorland, and this is where we park. By now you will have that wonderful feeling many of us get when finding ourselves on the edge of the wilderness: you will have left civilisation far behind and before you - and above you - lies a good deal of nothing at all.

It's into this great nothing that we wander. This is a circular walk which runs right around the Baggator Brook valley. Yes, by the way, Bagga Tor is spelled as two different words and, according to the map, its brook and farm are spelled as one.

Talking of the tor, the best thing is to make straight for it. It is the handsome pile of rocks you'll see a 100 feet above and



Basic hike: circular walk from Bagga Tor up to the ridge and Lynch Tor, north around Standon Hill to return across the floor of the valley via farm tracks.

Recommended map: OS OL 28 Dartmoor.

Distance and going: four miles mostly easy going.

directly in front of you. Climb it, because it provides a vantage point of the entire valley and therefore our route.

Far below you will see Baggator Farm - which is one of the most wonderful and isolated farmsteads on Dartmoor. The ancient place seems to lurk under its scattering of woods like something out of a dream.

The place is, quite simply, sensational. It's *Wuthering Heights*, Hardy, Du Maurier and Lorna Doone all rolled up in one.

It stands guard over lonely Baggator Brook as it debouches from its own very private valley into the big world beyond. The stream has run only a short distance down past the aforementioned plantation into its deep groove from its birth place far up on the boulder-strewn reaches of Standon Hill. As we've said, this walk takes us around this valley - basically, you take the bridleway which runs due east of Bagga Tor and soon you will come to the gate which opens into one of those big funnel-shaped areas you'll occasionally see both on Dartmoor and Exmoor - stone-walled compounds into which the moormen once drove their hill-stock.

William Crossing calls these places «strolls» - and when it came to this particular one, he was apparently obsessed by a number of «foreign bushes» which grew there. Having read the particular section of his famous *Guide To Dartmoor* after my visit, I failed to notice if this incongruous exotic herbage border still thrives.

Our route climbed to the watershed under Cock's Hill, where we made a right-angle turn north over Wapsworthy Common to Lynch Tor. This peak afforded us vast views in every direction. We could see the hills of the north Cornish coast, the whole of east Bodmin Moor, all of the mid Tamar Marches and huge swathes of central North Dartmoor. We could even peer south down into Princetown.

Now we followed the contours around to the flanks of Standon Hill to where we found ourselves exactly above the mid-point between Bagga Tor and Standon Farms. This is where we descended to reach the Standon track which took us left across the brook to join the public right of way up through Brousentor Farm, and thus back to the car.