

# THE TWO RIDGE WALK, WIDECOMBE

Words & Pictures by David Guiterman

**T**his walk takes you along two ridges running parallel

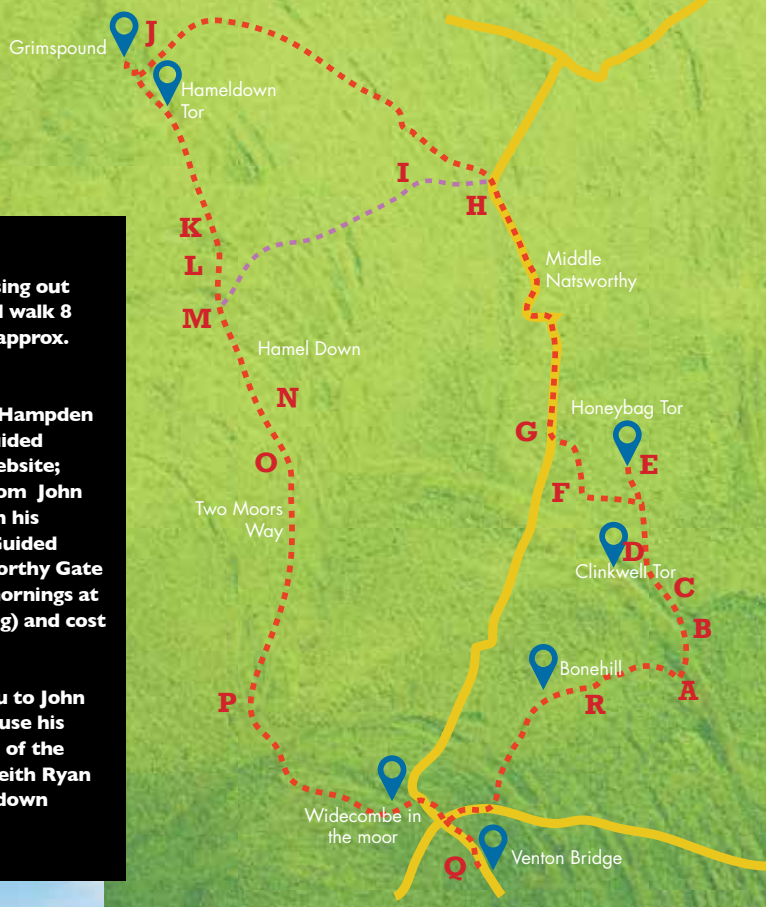
to one another, and as seen in the photos they could hardly be more different. Bonehill is a series of tors, whereas Hamel Down is relatively smooth and the view from the top is one of the best on Dartmoor.

## FOOT FILE

Short walk 2 miles; missing out Grimspound 7 miles; full walk 8 miles; total height gain approx. 482m (1590 ft).

For information on the Hampden Bomber or to book a guided walk see John Lowe's website; [www.hameldownboys.com](http://www.hameldownboys.com) John can also be contacted on his mobile 07967 887 368. Guided walks start from Natsworthy Gate on Friday and Sunday mornings at 9:30 (weather permitting) and cost £5.00 per person.

Photo credits: thank you to John Lowe for permission to use his photo of the North face of the RAF memorial and to Keith Ryan for the image of Hamel Down Cross in 2008.



Chinkwell Tor

**A** Parking can be limited at Bonehill, so it pays to arrive early in the day. Head North to Bell Tor.

**B** Bell Tor offers a great view of the South Hams framed by the rugged granite.

**C** Chinkwell Tor: The map shows several Bronze Age hut circles both to the East and West. You need a bit of imagination to see them as to people who came later and wanted to build walls, the huts were just piles of useful stones.

**D** Descend the slope from Chinkwell Tor and walk west downhill to a stone engraved 'Slades Well'. This is just the first of several such stones on this walk, each bearing the inscription 'DS'. They were erected by the 12th Duke of Somerset who owned Natsworthy Manor.



Honeybag Tor

**E** Climb up the largest of the Tors, Honeybag Tor before making your way back towards Chinkwell. From the bottom of the dip head west down the slope. Ahead on the skyline is the second of the ridges, Hamel Down.

**F** You have reached Thorny Lane, where you can turn left and make your way back to the car if you are doing the short walk. For the longer walks, turn right and keep going till you hit the Widecombe to Natsworthy road.

**G** Turn right on the Natsworthy road, passing Natsworthy Manor on the left. It is now a retreat but was at one time owned by Edward Seymour, the 12th Duke of Somerset.

**H** Shortly after passing The Manor, you arrive at Natsworthy Gate. This is the start of the path signposted 'Poad Near Firth Bridge' (spelling!) Take this path for the full walk which includes a visit to Grimspound.

(Shortcut - follow the lilac line on the map to join the Two Moors Way that runs along the top of Hameldown)



RAF Memorial Plaque

**I** After half mile take the left hand to discover the RAF memorial at grid ref.712807. It commemorates the crash of a second world war Hampden bomber from 49 squadron which on March 21st 1941 was returning to RAF Scampton from a bombing raid on the German submarine base at Lorient.

The inscription refers to the squadron number (49), initials of the four crew members and date of the crash.

RDW; Robert David Wilson, the pilot.  
 CJL; Charles John Lyon.  
 RB; Ronald Brames  
 RLAE; Richard Leonard  
 Ashburton Ellis whose home was in South Africa.

On the other side of the stone is a commemorative plaque added by The Aircrew Association in 1991.



BBC Countryfile

Robert's mother had found a gatepost at the entrance to the Moor which she arranged to have erected at the point where the cockpit had been found. This was later replaced by the standing stone you see today. The photo shows the stone being filmed by the BBC's Countryfile in 2014.

I am grateful to John Lowe, whom I met by chance at the memorial for this information. He has spent many years researching the background to the crash and now leads guided walks from Natsworthy Gate. (See foot file for details)

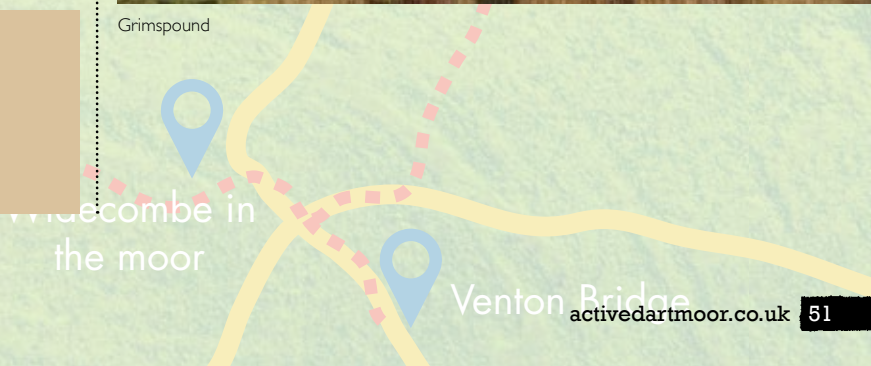
**Return to the path and walk to Grimspound.**

**J** Grimspound. This is the largest and best preserved of the Bronze-age settlements on Dartmoor. The wall around the outside was probably a double structure with a metre-wide passage inside.

From Grimspound head straight up the hill (compass bearing 150°), to Hameldown ridge and follow the Two Moors Way all along it.



Grimspound





Hameldown Cross picture taken 2008



Hameldown Cross picture taken 2016

**K** To the right you will see the medieval Hameldown Cross; highest of all the Dartmoor crosses. It is thought that it was moved from its original position to serve as a bound stone, one of many showing the extent of the Manor of Natsworthy.

Inscribed on its East face were: HC (Hameldown Cross), DS (you know who) and the date, 1854. I was unable to make out any of the inscription other than the 'C' and yet a photograph taken in 2008 shows it all clearly. It demonstrates how fast chemically weak granite can erode.

The Hameldown ridge is home to at least 7 Bronze-age cairns. They are more or less hidden by vegetation but thanks to the Duke of Somerset, many are clearly identified:

**L** Broad Burrow

**M** Single Burrow

**N**, Two Burrows.

It was at Two Burrows, in 1872, that Spence Bate discovered the Hameldown Dagger; one of the most important archaeological finds on Dartmoor. It consisted of an amber pommel inlaid with gold pins and a bronze blade. It was taken to Plymouth Museum for safekeeping but sadly lost in the war.



Hameldown Beacon in the distance

Continue past Hameldown Beacon

**O** pass a field boundary wall (Grid Ref. 707776) on your left.

**P** Here the Two Moors Way is joined from the right by Church Way. At the end of the field boundary, turn down to the left and walk into Widecombe.

**Q** Turn right to reach the village centre. The Rugglestone Inn is signposted.



**R** Continue East along the Bovey Tracey road, cross the East Webburn River and immediately turn left to walk through Bonehill, and back to your car. ■

Widecombe in the moor

Venton Bridge