

AN AUTUMN STOMP

Sue Viccars explores around Meavy and Sheepstor



Sue Viccars is a freelance outdoor writer and editor, specialising in southwest England – especially Dartmoor and Exmoor

A varied, non-taxing walk that visits a 16th-century leat, a Victorian reservoir and the burial place of the three Great White Rajahs of Sarawak! Coupled with that are constantly changing views, from lofty tors around Burrator to rolling fields and wooded valleys. Some paths will be muddy in winter.

A From the pub cross the green; turn left. Where the lane bears left turn right, signed Burrator Dam. Pass through oak woods, and three gates; a fourth leads into woodland. Take the left fork uphill to the Plymouth (Drake's) Leat (completed in 1591, to carry water to Plymouth). Follow the leat to a footpath junction; the uphill left fork meets a lane. Keep ahead to the dam.

B Cross the dam; pass a picnic area; eventually turn right by 15th-century St Leonard's Church in Sheepstor (worth a visit). Drop to cross a stream.

FOOT FILE

LENGTH: 5 miles (8km)
 TIME: 2½ hours
 START/FINISH: The Royal Oak Inn, Meavy SX 540672
 TERRAIN: Woods and field paths, quiet lanes; high stiles; one short steep ascent; boots essential
 MAP: OS Explorer OL28 Dartmoor
 PUBLIC TRANSPORT: Hourly (from 10am) from Yelverton
 PARKING: Laneside near pub



C Soon turn right through a gate along a track (dogs on leads). At track end bear slightly left, then right along a field edge. A gate leads to two gateways: keep left, and along the right edge of two fields. Cross a high stile, then two more on a fenced path. Follow a downhill path beneath oaks; cross a high stile onto a path. Turn right, soon bearing right downhill. Follow signs left over a stile on a fenced path. Another leads into woodland; follow the fence right. Cross a stile/footbridge/stile onto a lane, opposite Yeo Farm (1618).

D Turn left to a junction by medieval Marchant's Cross, once the tallest in the area (until car damage in 1937).

E To shorten the walk to c3.75 miles (6km) turn right and later left to the pub. Turn left uphill; where the lane bears left keep ahead across a high bank/stile into a field. Bear half right, then left along the hedge. Pass through a gateway, then diagonally left across the field. Pass through two gates;

bear right over a stile onto a lane. Turn right; descend to Lovaton, bearing right at the phone box. Look for a stile right onto a track; cross and turn left. Follow the path under trees, keeping right at a fork, then crossing a stile.

F At the next footpath junction turn right over a stile past oaks. A signpost points right over Lovaton Brook. A gate and hedgebanked path, and another gate lead to a lane. Turn right across the Meavy and right into the village. ■

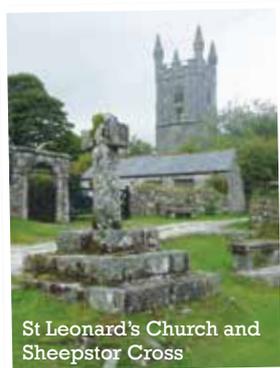
Sheeps Tor, seen from the route

WHERE TO EAT

Meavy is famed for two Royal Oaks: the magnificent oak tree on the green (said by some to date from the time of King John, 1166–1216) and its namesake: The Royal Oak Inn. This deservedly popular traditional pub – a 15th-century church house inn – positively draws you in after an autumn stomp. Flagstone floors, a welcoming open fire... and a good, varied menu strongly emphasising local produce (booking advisable). Dogs (and boots!) welcome in the public bar.

THE ROYAL OAK INN

Meavy, Devon PL20 6PJ
 Tel: (01822) 852944
 info@royaloakinn.org.uk
 www.royaloakinn.org.uk
 Open: Daily 11am–11pm (Easter–end Sept); 11am–3pm, 6–11pm (Oct–Easter)
 Food: Mon–Fri 12 noon–2.30pm, 6–9pm; Sat & Sun 12 noon–3pm, 6–9.30pm
 Sunday lunches £12.95 (vegetarian nut roast £9.95); meals £5.50–15.95; local produce (beef from Greenwell Farm, Meavy; Country Cheeses, Tavistock; Tamar Valley Fruiterers; Langage Ice Cream; Dartmoor Brewery, Princetown; Luscombe organic drinks); children's menu; takeaway fish and chips £5.95



St Leonard's Church and Sheepstor Cross



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