



Cosdon Beacon and Cranmere Pool

A tough walk across tors and moors from Belstone, including Hound Tor and bagging several other peaks with breathtaking views - on fine days!

Essential Facts

- Route distance: 21.00 km (13.1 miles)
- Approximate time: 7 hours
- Approx. total ascent: 530 metres
- Start point Grid Ref: SX 621 938
- GPS Ref: SX 62125 93826
- Recommended O.S. Map: Explorer OL 28
- Toughness Rating: Devon & Dartmoor 4

Please see the notes on Toughness Ratings at the end of this report

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CHALLENGE ?**

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THE ROUTE

This very demanding walk necessitates good navigation skills, including using the compass. Like all Toughness Level 4 walks in this area it should be undertaken or lead only by very experienced mountain walkers.

Parts of the route cross the Okehampton ranges, where military firing exercises periodically take place. During such times the ranges are closed to the public. Range firing times, indicated by red flags flying on the moors, can be obtained from the automated messaging service on 0800 4584868.

The start point, **S**, for this route is the public car park on the northern outskirts of the village of Belstone next to Brenamoor common.

From the car park, continue into the village and take the left fork as you pass the village stocks on your left. As you round the left hand bend, Belstone green opens up in front and you should carry straight onto it, leaving the road. You will shortly pick up a well defined track leading down into the valley, past the bench commemorating W.W. Westlake, former parish Councillor and Portreeve, who lived all his life in this beautiful Dartmoor village. Councillor Westlake happens to be the Father of your walk contributor.

At the bottom of the valley, cross the river Taw, playground of fictional Tarka the Otter, and continue straight ahead keeping the dry stone walls on your left. From here, there are several pony trails leading up the hillside and heading in various directions. The aim is to head in a generally south easterly direction towards the summit of Cosdon Beacon (known as Cawsand Beacon by the locals and pronounced cor-son) some 2.0 km away. Note that the summit can't be seen until you are almost on top of it and that some off-path walking may be required.

On reaching Cosdon Beacon, **A**, pause for a well earned breather and take in the outstanding view. The route now continues slightly west of south along the well defined path, bagging Little Hound Tor, an ancient stone circle, Hound Tor, Wild Tor and ending at Hangingstone Hill, **B**. The steel "shed" up here is an Army observation post for spotting gunfire and examples can be seen on many hilltops in this area. They replace the earlier stone structures as they can be lifted into position by helicopter when required, thereby reducing the environmental impact of permanent structures.

From Hangingstone Hill, continue in an easterly direction down the hill and onto the boggy flat ground below. This area is a watershed with the river Taw flowing north and the East Dart flowing south. The next waypoint is Cranmere Pool letterbox, **C**, and your navigation will need to be accurate to find it. Despite the name, the pool was drained in the early 19th century and the small concrete letterbox now sits in a shallow depression at the head of the West Okement river. Once found however, you can enter your name and any comments in the book inside.

From here, head north across the moor aiming for the small pond at Ockerton Court. From here you will be able to pick up the old peat cutters' path heading east which will lead you to one of the range tracks. Turn left onto this vehicle track, following it north until you reach one of the older stone Army Observation posts, this one being known as "Splinterproof 15", **D**.

Follow the road in a north westerly direction taking the track forking off to the right after about 3 km, just before the bridge over the river.



Belstone Telegraph Office
(Closed)



Track On The Eastern Slopes



Boundary Wall

At the end of this track, turn left onto the road and follow it past East Okement farm, turning right onto the track immediately after the bridge crossing Black-a-Ven Brook. Many years ago, the Army built a shelter at the farm so that the farmer could retire to safety if the shellfire started to get too close!

From the junction, continue down to the river crossing at Cullever Steps, E. Here you have a choice of crossing methods- the ancient Cullever Steps stepping stones, the 19th century cobbled ford built to transport horse drawn gun carriages across the river or the more modern concrete bridge.

Whatever your choice, once across the river, take the track to the left heading in a north easterly direction and follow it around the side of Watchet Hill until you come to a gate on the edge of the moors. Go through the gate and follow the road back down into the village, perhaps stopping off at the Tors Hotel for some refreshment on the way. From here the car park, S, is only a short distance away, retracing the outward route.

Refreshment

The Tors Hotel
Family run Hotel, Bar and
Restaurant
Belstone
Tel: 01223 340295
Bar snacks to restaurant
dishes



The Tors Hotel

LOCAL INFO

Belstone Village

The highest village on Dartmoor, the residents participate in the curious ritual of "beating the bounds" every seven years. This now great social event finds its roots in periodic walking the parish boundary to make sure that neighbouring villagers were not moving the boundary stones in order to claim parish land. The walk took in all of the boundary stones (an example can be seen at Cullever Steps) and involved the youngest member present being hoisted aloft, upside down, and having his head banged on top of the boundary stone to ensure that he remembered it's correct position! He was compensated for his pain with a shilling, though doubtless this sum has varied over the years, which was given to him by the village Portreeve.

The Portreeve was a position likened to an unofficial village Bobby whose main duty was to protect the interests of the Lord of the Manor. However, since he was elected by the parishioners' whose main interests (in the distant past at least) lay in disregarding authority, it is unlikely that he wholeheartedly upheld his Lord's interests!

Cranmere Pool

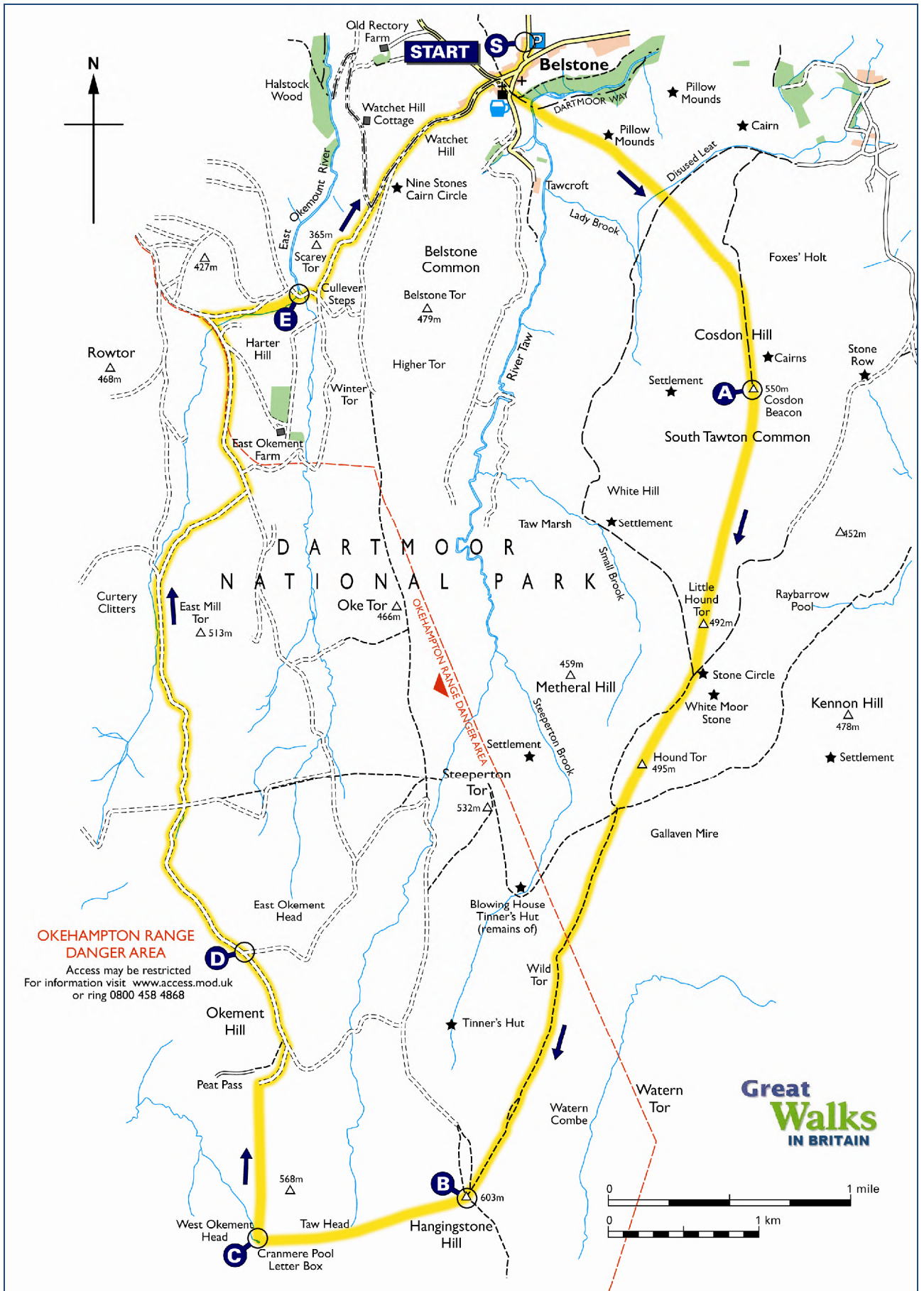
Cranmere pool is widely believed to be the home of Dartmoor letterboxing, the pastime of hiding a visitor book and rubber stamp in a remote location and publishing clues as to its whereabouts. The origins of the letterbox at Cranmere Pool date back to 1854 and the hobby was pretty much contained to Dartmoor until as recently as 1998 when the Smithsonian published an article in the USA about this strange British hobby. Aided by the internet, it underwent a world wide explosion with letterboxes now in virtually every country in the world.

The collection of Cranmere Pool visitor books is housed in the Plymouth museum. Unfortunately, the book bearing the entry of Prince Edward in 1921 was stolen before it could be retrieved.

There is a tradition where a visitor leaves a stamp addressed postcard in the letterbox and the next visitor takes it home and posts it. On a recent visit, I retrieved 3 postcards addressed to Switzerland which would subsequently arrive at their destination bearing a Herefordshire postmark.

**COSDON BEACON AND CRANMERE POOL
G.P.S. WAYPOINTS**

WAYPOINT NAME	MAP REF		CO-ORDINATES		ELEVATION: Metres
CRA S	S	SX	62125	93826	300
CRA A	A	SX	63600	91523	550
CRA B	B	SX	61700	86116	604
CRA C	C	SX	60285	85851	560
CRA D	D	SX	60275	87776	565
CRA E	E	SX	60610	92126	355



MAP LEGEND					
	Great Walks route		Church with tower		Spot height - metres
	M6 Motorway		Church with spire		Information centre
	A23 Main road		Other place of worship		Parking
	B2116 Secondary road		Cathedral / Abbey		Public convenience
	Minor road		Building		Public house
	Other road		Built up area		Picnic site
	Track		Woodland		Camp site
	Footpath		Sand, shingle or mud		Major tourist feature
	Bridleway		Water feature		Other tourist feature
	National trail				
	Railway				

Safety First

Safety should always be your first priority in planning and undertaking a walk, whether on your own or leading a group. Please read these Safety First and Walking Our Routes notes.

Lead a group of other walkers only if you have leadership and navigational experience adequate for the 'worst case' conditions which may be encountered on the particular walk, bearing in mind the terrain, possible weather and navigational demands.

Weigh up the capabilities of your party, in terms of fitness and walking speed. Adjust your time expectations accordingly.

Ensure all your party are adequately clothed for the weather and conditions. Footwear is particularly important. Clothing must protect against cold, wet or strong sun according to the time of year.

Emergencies are quite rare, but it is essential to think ahead about what to do if someone in your party sustains an injury. Will you have a First Aid kit? Is there a qualified First Aider in the party? How could help be summoned in a serious eventuality?

Refreshment, particularly water, can be vital. Dehydration in hot summer conditions can be rapid, and frequent intake of fluids is essential.

On tougher walks it is a good idea to tell someone where you are planning to go – and when you expect to be back. Remember - mobile phones often lose reception in mountainous or isolated areas.

All our walks use legitimate routes: Public Rights of Way, Public Footpaths, Bridleways, Permissive Paths, Access Land, Byways and Roads.

Road walking calls for particular care. When there is no defined footpath or verge wide enough for safe walking it is usually best to walk on the right – facing oncoming traffic. An exception may be a tight bend, where walkers would be more visible on the left.

Occasionally you may find a public footpath blocked or unuseable. It is perfectly in order to take the shortest available diversion without damaging crops, perhaps around a field margin.

It is courteous to close gates after passing through, sometimes even if the gate was open when you arrived – particularly if it is obvious livestock may escape.

Mutual respect for farm animals is to be encouraged! Don't frighten or annoy them, but equally don't put your party members in danger or discomfort. You certainly wouldn't be the first walkers to go round the outside of a field of frisky bullocks.

Dogs should always be kept on a lead anywhere near farm animals, and under close supervision elsewhere in the countryside.

Walking Our Routes

Our walks are designed to be negotiated using the route directions in conjunction with the map section provided. We suggest walkers also take the Ordnance Survey Explorer or Outdoor Leisure map recommended for each walk.

On mountain, moorland and open heathland walks it is **ESSENTIAL** to have navigational expertise and tools, including the recommended Ordnance Survey map(s).

Take care to observe any cautions in the route description; exposed paths, areas liable to flooding etc.

Consider conditions before setting off. Will heavy rain have made a water meadow impassable? Will frost or snow make a path slippery?

When navigating the route look for clues to confirm you are in the right place. Are map features where you would expect on the ground? Are features mentioned in the text where expected? If you suspect you may have taken a wrong turn, take action sooner rather than later. It is better to re-trace to a known point rather than carry on regardless with the possibility of becoming increasingly confused.

All our routes are carefully checked before publication, but features can change on the ground – sometimes surprisingly quickly. Footpaths may be re-routed, buildings can appear or change significantly and these days pub names seem to change frequently.

The approximate time given for each walk is based on an average walking speed of 2.5 miles per hour (4 km/hour), plus an allowance for ascent, descent and any difficult terrain.

Total ascent is the approximate total ascent over the whole walk.

GPS users can enter in the waypoints provided in each of our walk reports. It is important to read our guide **Introducing GPS for Walkers**, available as a PDF file from the Great Walks in Britain web site.

Remember that GPS is a great navigational tool, but only one of those available to the navigator. Never dispense with conventional map and compass – and the training and skills to use them, especially on mountain, moorland or open heathland walks.

TOUGHNESS RATINGS

Most of our **Devon & Dartmoor** routes can be undertaken by reasonably fit walkers able to utilise the map segments and our recommended Ordnance Survey maps, together with the route guidance notes.

The toughest walks should be undertaken or led only by experienced mountain walkers with navigational expertise. Always consider recent and forecast weather.

Each walk has been allocated a **Toughness Rating**:

1. Easier walks with modest ascent and generally on well defined paths. There may be stiles or narrow gateways to negotiate.
2. Routes which are more demanding. They may include more ascent and possibly paths which are looser or more difficult underfoot.
3. More strenuous walks. There may be prolonged steep ascents, and perhaps several ascents over the whole walk. Conditions may be challenging underfoot.
4. The toughest walks, requiring considerable fitness and navigational experience. There may be prolonged steep ascents. The ability to navigate by compass may be essential.

Toughness Ratings are allocated in the context of the terrain in the edition area. For example a walk rated as demanding in Cambridgeshire may be equivalent to an easier or moderate route in Devon & Dartmoor