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## Postbridge to Bellever Tor

Starting point and OS Grid reference	National Park car park at Postbridge (SX 647789)
Ordnance Survey map	OL 28 - Dartmoor
Distance	6 miles
Traffic light rating	

**Introduction:** This walk from Postbridge takes you through the Bellever Forest run by the Forestry Commission to Bellever Tor with its spectacular granite rock formations. The walk passes the Laughter Man, an ancient standing stone at the end of what is left of a double stone row and on the descent from Bellever Tor, you pass through an area of the ancient Kraps Ring settlement dating back to the Bronze Age. A number of posts have been stuck in the ground to mark the more interesting features but even so, to the untrained eye, they are difficult to appreciate. However, the hut circles can be discovered amongst the heather.

There are great views from the top of the Tor and the sinister mass of Dartmoor Prison can be clearly seen.

At Postbridge is an impressive clapper bridge, possibly from the 14<sup>th</sup> century; one of the largest on Dartmoor and a magnet for tourists, as it is conveniently next to the road. There is a small Post Office Store and the River Dart Hotel where sustenance can be obtained before/after your walk and toilets at the National Park Centre, where the walk starts.

Postbridge is on the B3212 between Moretonhampstead and Princetown.

**Start:** Leave the car park (SX 647789) and turn left along the B3212. After passing the Post Office our route is on the right on the public bridleway **before** the road bridge. However, before starting the walk proper, a “must see” is the ancient clapper bridge over the East Dart River which is clearly visible on the right. This is one of Dartmoor’s oldest clapper bridges and probably dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and built so that packhorses could cross the river.

Return to the bridleway on the other side of the road bridge, now on the left. Follow the bridleway to the left of a plantation, until you reach a broad stony track close to the minor road (SX 650780). Go more or less straight ahead to head for a second plantation on the right. The bridleway runs parallel with the road at this point.

When the bridleway drops down to the road, turn left and follow it down past some houses. As it bends to the right, take the bridleway off to the left, just before the cattle grid (SX 655774).

At the corner of the Bellever Forest, turn right on the broad track. You are passing through a pay and display car park area which could be an alternative if the National Park Centre car park was full.

Stay on the main track past the toilets and information boards. When it forks at the corner where there are picnic tables, take the left fork to the gate.

Go through the gate (and Take the track straight ahead, ignoring the track to the right. On the left at this point is a nice view of the East Dart River.

When the track splits, the left fork going to Laughter Hole House, take the right fork for Laughter Hole Farm. Stay on the track until it starts to turn right. Ignore this turn and carry on straight ahead through the gate following the fingerpost marked simply as "Path".

Just after passing a stone barn, come to a gate. Once through it, the track splits (SX 658759). Take the right hand path following the fingerpost "Public Bridlepath Country Road B3357 at Huccerby Cottage".

At the top of a small rise, there is a track branching off to the right but ignore this and keep straight ahead for the gate, where there is a three way fingerpost. Follow the arm for Dunnabridge Pound.

You are now in open countryside and over to the right peeping over a wall is a standing stone (SX 652754), actually the end of a stone row, known as the Laughter Man. To its right is Laughter Tor.

Continue along the track for just over half a mile to reach Dunnabridge Pound (SX 646747) .This is a large circle of stone wall just before you get to a farm. It does not look particularly exciting but its origins go back to the Bronze Age. It is also about dead centre of the Dartmoor National Park.

From the gate on the track, turn around and bear left following the fingerpost for Bellever Tor and Postbridge. The path runs along the right hand side of a wall. Follow this wall along turning right to follow its 90° right turn until you reach a fingerpost at a left hand 90° turn of the wall (SX 647750). The path actually cuts across to this point but is not clear on the ground and if you follow the wall you cannot go far wrong. Turn left at the fingerpost and follow the wall to your left, heading for Bellever Tor straight ahead.

According to the OS map, the footpath goes across by the trees but the favoured route to the Tor is to stay with the wall to a gate, go through it and follow a broad track bending right to the Tor.

There is a "notch" in the Tor which is your aiming point.

As you approach the Tor, the trig. point (SX 646764) becomes clear.

Continuation of the walk is in effect through the "notch". Follow the obvious path which runs between the two plantations. As you descend from the Tor and the ground levels out , the official public footpath goes right into the plantation but I preferred to stick to the more open land between the plantations. This is Access Land so you can walk where you like.

On the more level section, if you look back towards the Tor, you may be able to make out the remains of the walls of an ancient settlement which is marked on the OS map.

As you progress between the plantations, there are other ancient remains to see, not least some hut circles and a small stone row. There are a number of posts which

mark many of these. One of my photos is of a scene with a hawthorn tree in blossom. I took it because I liked the picture but when I got closer, I realised the tree was actually growing in a hut circle and was I think an outer hut of the Krops Ring Settlement, shown on the OS map.

Continue to the end of the open area between the plantations and follow the obvious footpath at the end. After crossing a broad track, make your way down the firebreak, coming out at a car park – you have to climb over a “stile” of half logs in the fence.

Turn right at the road to return to the National Park centre.

