



Walk 7 – 8 miles: Stalldown's Bronze Age Antiquities

This is a rough, moderately difficult moorland walk along the Erme valley and up onto Stalldown, taking in Bronze age huts, enclosures and the Cornwood Maidens stone row. Do not attempt in poor visibility or without OS map / app.

Walks are undertaken at your own risk. **Please follow the countryside code and leave no trace.** It is the responsibility of the walker not to trespass, cause damage or upset livestock. Remember, that livestock are kept in the open fields and open moor so dogs should be kept on leads. Some pathways can be muddy and therefore, suitable footwear should be worn. But don't worry if you do get muddy shoes/boots, muddy boots are still welcome in the Cornwood Inn.... and it will clean off! We recommend you carry OS Explorer map 28 (Dartmoor) or have the OS app on your phone if venturing off the roads and onto the moor.

General Information

This is a rough moorland walk with superb scenery and many interesting Bronze Age features. Sturdy boots are recommended and the walk should only be attempted in good visibility weather and not be undertaken without a map and compass or suitable GPS navigation tool (and the knowledge of how to use them!!).

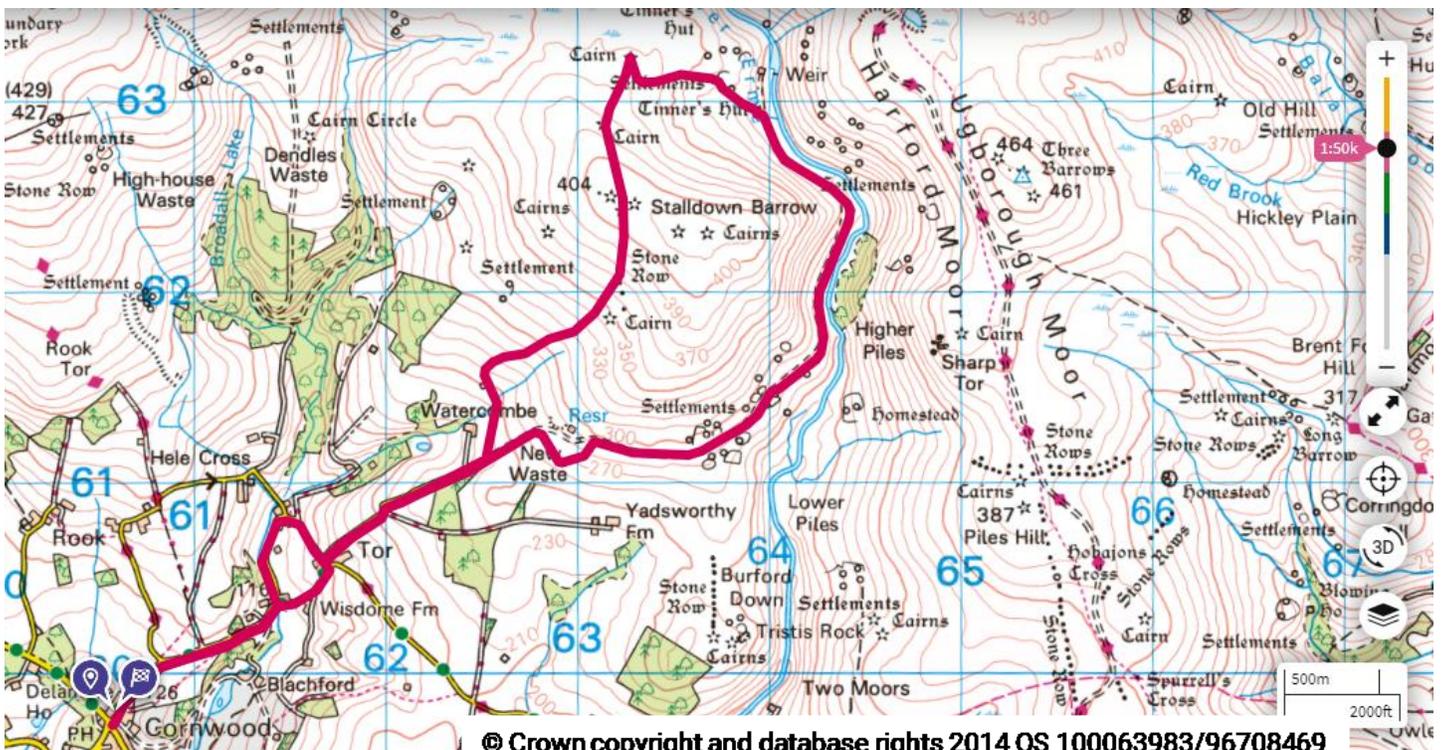
Length: 8 miles / 13km

Ascent: 1,300ft / 400m

Grade: Moderately difficult/strenuous. Open terrain demanding navigation skills. Can be wet underfoot. Easier in spring when there is less tussocky grass around.

Approximate time: 3hrs 30mins

QR code to the map on [explore.OSmaps.com](https://www.explore.OSmaps.com)





Walk description

Parking is no longer possible beyond the New Waste moor gate (GR625611) so either park in Cornwood village or (2.5km shorter than parking in Cornwood) park alongside the river Yealm by turning left immediately after the bridge over the river named on the OS map as Wisdome Bridge (also referred to locally as Vicarage Bridge). Park on the left just before a newish house on the right. Either way, proceed on foot along the lanes to the New Waste moor gate at GR625611. From the moor gate follow the concrete track uphill to the Public Footpath sign immediately before the water works. Follow the path right around, but outside, the waterworks perimeter. After crossing a small stream on a clapper-style bridge go leftwards to a stile over the field wall and onto the open moorland. Go directly uphill until the gravel waterworks road is met then follow the track eastwards. In about 0.5km the field wall on the right curves away from the track.



Note: Just before the wall curves away you can see banked earth against the field side of the wall and a ditch on the moor side, this is typical of a “corn-ditch wall” – it creates a barrier to animals trying to get off the moor into fields that contain crops and allows any that do get into the arable fields system to easily escape.

There are fine examples of small Bronze Age enclosures and hut circles just above the track so it is worth deviating from the track and walking just above it. The larger circular enclosure walls and the smaller circular hut circle walls can be easily made out. One of the first huts displays the double wall construction with rubble / earth infill, an internal dividing wall a south facing doorway.



The track cuts right through a fairly extensive Bronze Age settlement area. The huts and enclosures below the track are in poorer condition. There are in the region of 40 or so hut circles, probably occupied somewhere between 2000BC and 800BC but it is not known if occupation was continuous or how many huts were occupied at any one time. Follow the track round into the Erme valley and continue up the valley, past the ancient woodland of Piles Copse on the opposite side of the valley. Once past Piles Copse, the track bears left but still follows the valley. Continue along the track until a stream is reached at GR639629.

Note: In the main valley bottom around this point there is much evidence of tin streaming in the form of tinner’s mounds. Tin was found as alluvial deposits in valley bottoms along old (and existing) river courses. The valley bottom was effectively turned over and the distinctive spoil mounds created. The mounds often show one face which appears deliberately faced like a small stone wall. Water channels were used to help wash out the tin grains. Tin streaming has probably taken place off and on since the Bronze Age right up to the 1800’s, but the peak output years for streamed Dartmoor tin were between 1500 and 1550.



From where the small stream crosses the waterworks track, on the right hand side of the stream and about 30 paces up from the track lies Downing's House. This is of beehive construction and was probably used by the tin streamers as a cache to store tools in overnight. Leave the gravel track and proceed up the right side of the small steam valley (quad bike track on the right to follow). More Bronze Age huts are apparent as the ground levels out. Follow the quad track past a hut circle and find the remains of an enclosure wall. The going from here is rough moorland with no guiding features. Walk in a north westerly direction for about 0.5km (little in the way of tracks). The aim is to get to a Bronze Age burial cist (Kistvaen), marked as a cairn on the OS map at GR633633. Keep going until the horizon in front of you recedes and more open ground comes into view. Once in the vicinity of the cairn, look for a grass covered mound a metre or so high containing some protruding boulders. It is not easy to spot from a distance but fairly obvious if you are close - it is worth searching around for! This is a good example of a Bronze Age burial cist – the chamber is obvious and originally it would have been had a capstone and been completely covered in earth / small stones. Traces of two outer stone circles can be seen close to the mound

The route now goes uphill. Look for an area of shorter vegetation and some larger boulders 0.5km to the south west. Make your way towards the boulders looking for another burial cairn on the left near the top of boulder patch. This cairn is at GR632628. It is in a poor state with no evidence of a burial chamber or retaining stone circle. The way ahead now lies in a southerly direction, using any animal trod (path created by animals to get from one grazing patch to another) you can usefully find. Eventually the large standing stones of the Cornwood Maidens stone row break the horizon. Head towards the start of the stone row.





Note: This Bronze Age stone row contains some very large stones and in common with many stone rows would have had a terminal or blocking stone at one end (a large stone or a flatter stone placed at right angle to the general alignment of the other stones in the row) and a cairn at the other. There are two burial cairns close to the row, one on each side. Animals using the stones as rubbing posts will have almost certainly pushed over the stones in the original setting, so some reconstruction has taken place. There appears to be some confusion about the exact alignment of the original stone placements as not all the stones are now in line. A kerb circle (ring of flattish stones about 4m in diameter, possibly the remains of a burial cairn) lies almost embedded in the row a few hundred metres from the north end.

Follow the stone row until the large stones come to an end and a shallow valley appears on your left. Head south down the hillside, keeping the valley on your left - avoiding marshy ground around the springline by walking westwards for a few hundred metres. Aim for the moor gate in a corner formed by field walls (GR625616). Take the rough track after the gate and follow this back to the New Waste moor gate. Follow the lanes back to the start and possibly a welcome pint or two in the Cornwood Inn.

