



○ CHUDLEIGH  
 ROUTE FROM EXETER TO  
 CENTRAL TRACKWAY  
 DARTMOOR

## SUGGESTED ROUTE FROM EXETER TO THE GREAT CENTRAL TRACKWAY (DARTMOOR).

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IN the *Trans. Dev. Assoc.*, Vol. XXI, p. 435, Mr. R. Burnard, in giving an account of the great central trackway on Dartmoor, traces it eastwards to Heatree Down, whence he surmises it may have gone to Chudleigh and so to Exeter. For some years I had been studying a route from Exeter westwards which appeared to have some of the characteristics of a British trackway, and had traced it to Heatree Down. Having now become acquainted with Mr. Burnard's paper, it appears to me that the two tracks are the two parts of a way which led from Exeter across Dartmoor, and which is complementary to the northern route from Exeter to Okehampton and the southern which crosses the Teign at Were Barton below Kingsteignton.

The suggested route is as follows :—

Exe Bridge, Church Path (S.E. side of St. Thomas Church), foot-path to Ide, thence by road to Idestone, Windy Cross, Leigh Cross, "Windhill Gate" on road to Bridford from Leigh Cross, direct road to Heltor (excluding Bridford). Road to Blackingstone, parish road S.S.W. from "1" in point 1084 (Ordnance Scale 1" ed. 1912-13), which leads below a wood to a minor county road. Cross this latter to a grassy slightly depressed track, which goes S.W. to a small gate on the further side of another road. This gate opens on a narrow road which goes W. for about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile. At this point a narrow deep lane leaves it on the S. side and winds down to the Lustleigh-Moretonhampstead road. The way goes down valley for 300 yards, and opposite Wray Barton turns S.W. into a narrow road. Then the direction is through Barnecourt, over "Clapper Bridge," past Langstone, points 1041 and 1014, and again S.W. to Heatree Down.

Passing S.S.W. over Heatree Down to point 1237, it ascends the shoulder above (N. side) the East Webburn River by a sunken way, not clearly marked in parts, to join the ancient

trackway shown on the ordnance map as crossing Hameldon.

The reasons for considering it as British are :—

1. It goes from Exeter on the trackway described by Mr. T. J. Joce (*Trans. Dev. Assoc.*, Vol. LIX, pp. 271-277), which leads to the R. Teign, as far as where his track turns down S. to cross the Alpha Brook. The difference between his description and mine is that I consider the beginning of the track is by Church Path; he, that it went along Cowick St. as far as an old cross and by a road now destroyed.

2. The general mode of this route is to ascend spurs of the main ridges, generally keeping near but not quite on the watershed. When the main ridges are traversed, as they must be, seeing they run S.S.E. and this route goes S.W. by W., the track crosses the ridges near the high points but not quite over them. The following details elucidate this contention :—

Exeter to Ide—traverse of ridge.

Ide to Ideford—spur.

Ideford to Windy Cross— $\frac{2}{3}$  on a spur.

Windy Cross to Leigh Cross—spur.

Traverse of Teign Valley for  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile.

To Heltor—spur.

Heltor to Blackingstone—nearly on watershed.

Blackingstone to R. Wray—traverse of ridge and descent at only practicable point, the slope elsewhere being very steep and rocky.

Wray Barton to Point 1041—traverse of two ridges.

1041 to Heatree Common—watershed.

These methods of crossing hilly country are very characteristic of old tracks in Devon; where it is only exceptionally that the exact watershed is kept, although the tracks go near it.

3. The following landmarks and names exist on this route: Idestone, Windy Cross, Leigh Cross, Heltor, Blackingstone, Clapper Bridge, Heatree; while there is a camp on Hunter's Tor (S.E. of 'Clapper Bridge'), and hut circles on Easdon Tor and Cripdon Down—between which hills the track runs.

Idestone suggests a worship stone to which the name of the local saint was afterwards attached, the Permian breccia having possibly supplied the stone. Perhaps Windy Cross was placed near by, just as the cross on Mardon Down is placed near the stone circle, as a protection from heathen influences.

Not only is Heatree a Celtic name, but the collection of hut circles on Heatree Down shows the actual site of the village.

There is no clapper bridge at the river crossing so-called, though one of the two bridges there is very old and is built

in a more important style than would be expected on a parish road.

Blackingstone and Heltor are excellent sighting points, the latter being very visible from Haldon.

4. The general line from Heltor to Heatree agrees with that of the great central trackway, allowing for the habit of such tracks to deviate in parts according to the lie of the land.

5. With the exception of Ide and Idestone, no village or hamlet is touched. The road to Heltor through Bridford leaves this way at Windmill Gate and rejoins it at Heltor, and may be regarded as a loop formed on the ancient track to give access to the village when this was built in an adjacent valley.

An objection to this route being considered very ancient is, that with the exception of half a mile from Windy Cross towards Leigh Cross, it does not form a parish boundary. This must be weighed against those presented, which, in my opinion, are in favour of it being an old track. That the part which traverses Haldon is at least medieval is shown by Windy Cross, which is an early gothic type. It is interesting that from near this point a trackway leads down to Doddiscombsleigh, and may have been the ancient way to that village and so to Crocombe Bridge.

#### ADDENDUM.

Since writing my paper I have had an opportunity of examining Cripdon Down and Hayne Down. From opposite the point where the "ancient trackway" reaches the Heatree-Widdicombe road a green track can be followed along the S. edge of Heatree Common to a lane S. of a plantation, which ends at "Jay's Grave." Thence a grassy track keeps the same E. direction over Cripdon Down to a road W. of Hayne Down. On the further side of this road two tracks continue it, one N.E. over the centre of the Down, the other E. by N. over its shoulder. Each terminates at a farm, the latter at "Southcott" on a parish road to Manaton.

There is nothing to note about the tracks except that the one on the shoulder of Hayne Down is there sunken and narrow, suggesting a great age. To my mind they suggest ways on to the Moor from Manaton rather than parts of any through route; but they may be loops of the route described in this paper, designed to pass near the enclosure formerly existing at Manaton (*Crossing's Guide to Dartmoor*, Part 3, p. 74).