

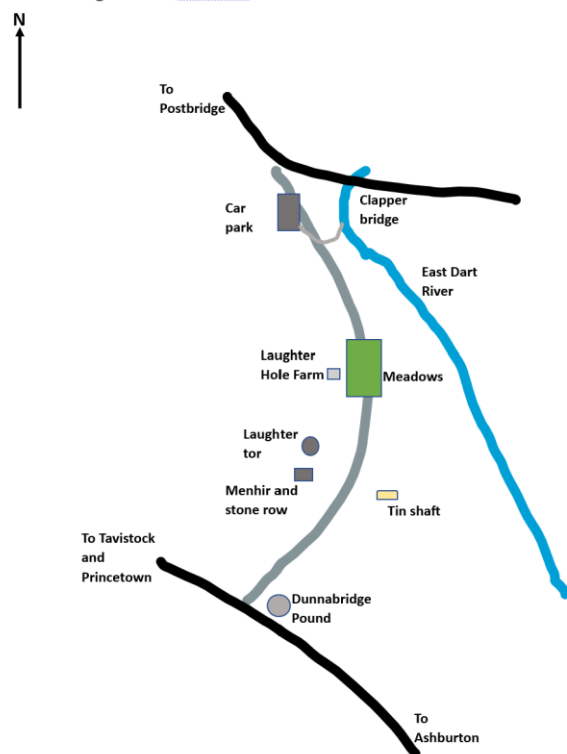
Bellever forest carpark to Dunnabridge pound through forest, meadow and moor: an accessible walk

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This route has been tested by the Wheeled Access Group, members of which use a range of mobility scooter types. It is an out and back route and can be done in one direction as there are car parks at each end. It is about 2.2 miles in each direction. Parking for the walk is at Bellever forest car park. There is a charge to park but there is ample room and accessible toilets.

The route follows gravel forest tracks with some slopes. During the rains of last winter some of the gravel was washed away leaving larger stones on the surface, making the track bumpy in some places. In some areas it is possible to go onto the grass to avoid the track. It does not have any stiles, steep banks, or ditches but there are some gates which cannot be opened by someone on a mobility scooter. It is a category 3 route as defined by Disabled Ramblers due to the hills and areas of rough track.

Walking route: Bellever Forest Carpark to Dunnabridge Pound,
through forest, meadow and moor



The walk starts at the car park but there is a small side route that is worth taking either at the beginning or end of the walk.

For the side route, take the small track from the car park towards the river and follow it upstream. You can go as far as the clapper bridge where the road crosses the East Dart River or just sit by the river. The central slab of the clapper bridge was lost over a hundred years ago, leaving only pilings and slabs on each bank. No one is quite sure how the central clapper was lost. It provided a crossing place for the ancient tenements positioned further along the west and east banks and linked with the Lych Way that runs through Bellever.



Clapper Bridge over River Dart

For the main walk, follow the track from the car park down the hill (away from the road you arrived on) and then up through the gate and keep straight on. Don't take the path to your right, it will lead you further into the forest and then on to Postbridge.

The forest was begun in 1931 by the Forestry Commission. The Commission purchased Bellever Farm from the Duchy of Cornwall creating a large coniferous forest. You will be going along the forest track, up a hill through the forest. The ground and fallen trees are covered with mosses which are quite magical.

Keep following the path, ignoring tracks to your right, and left until you reach another gate which leads into land managed by Devon Wildlife Trust. This is Bellever Moor and Meadow Reserve. These ancient meadows were part of Laughter Hole Farm which has records going back to 1355. They include flowery hay meadows, rush pasture, purple moor grass mire, heathy grassland, moorland, unimproved, semi-improved, and rough pasture.

Along the track are some trees with wonderful lichens, particularly *Usnea articulata* or string of sausages lichen. Lichens of this size indicate how clean the air is.

There has been a farm on this spot since 1733 although the more recent looking bungalow was built around 1890. Once the site of an earth tremor, on Christmas Day in 1923, when the Christmas decorations fell down.

After the meadows the track goes through some more forest managed by Dartmoor Pony Heritage Trust, so keep a look out for their ponies before you pass through a gate onto the open moor. This is part of "Postman's Road", between Postbridge and Dunnabridge. It was ridden daily by Jack Bellamy, the postman in years gone by. Six days a week, he rode 10 miles, visiting 45 farms.

Once onto the open moor there are great views, Yar tor to your left, Haytor behind you and then Princetown as you go over the rise. You will see Laughter Tor on your right. Able bodied walkers will

be able to go to the top and enjoy the views. It is 416 m above sea level. Shortly after the tor there is a standing stone or menhir and the remains of a stone row. There is a path up to these. On your left there is a fenced area and a sign from the Dartmoor Tin working Research Group. The fenced area surrounds the remains of a shaft sunk in the 1950s. Further down the hill you can follow the tin workings.



View from the track

Continue following the path across the open moor until you reach Dunnabridge Pound Farm on the B3357 road (Ashburton to Tavistock road). This last section is downhill and quite rough in places. Scooter users may prefer to bypass the track and use the grass.

Dunnabridge Pound is on your left as you approach the B3357. The origins of the Pound are uncertain but it has been suggested it is Bronze Age in origin and may have had a number of huts inside. It has been well maintained and there are records from medieval times (1305 is the earliest) as a cattle pound. Records from 1607 describe it as a Pound for cattle during the drifts. The Pound is surrounded by a drystone wall built from granite blocks.

Just inside the entrance to the pound is a granite seat with a canopy, known as the Judges chair. Many stories suggest it is the relics of the Presidential Chair at Crocken Tor where the Stannary Parliament sat, and was brought to the Pound at a later date.



The Judges Chair at Dunnabridge Pound

If you have left your car at Bellever you will now need to retrace your steps, enjoying the views from a different direction. If you have a non-walking driver you can be collected from the road by Dunnabridge Pound.