

Route - Showery Tor, Brown Willy, Butterstor Downs, Garrow Downs, Alex Tor, Louden Hill

Interest - Cornwall's two highest hills, massive cairns, Bronze Age settlements, a lost medieval settlement, King Arthur's Hall, a major stone circle (and lesser ones), 'logan rocks' – and great views from the heights.

Useful Information

Parking: Roughtor Car Park (free).

Intermediate Parking: De Lank Waterworks (½ mile), Stannon Circle.

Getting There: From A39, at N end of Camelford, take 1st or 2nd turn on R and continue for just under 2 miles.

Transport: Nearest runs to Camelford, served by Western Greyhound buses 510, 561, 584, 594.

Refreshments: None, nearest in Camelford.

Toilets: None.

Route Directions

Roughtor Car Park to Brown Willy Summit – 2.00 miles

Start from the Roughtor Car Park at 13829/81879.

Go through 2 wooden gates and down to cross a clapper bridge. Almost immediately, you pass a National Trust sign to the 43rd Wessex Division memorial plaque. Ignore it and head roughly SE for the rocky outcrop on Showery Tor, at the northern end of the Roughtor ridge. *You will encounter many relics of prehistory – enclosures, cairns, hut circles and boundary banks - on the way up, as you will during the whole walk. As you climb, off to your left is the strange 550 yard long stone bank investigated by Time Team in 2007.* The climb becomes fairly steep for the last part up to the rocky outcrop, looking much like the Cheesewring and surrounded by a massive cairn, at 14931/81320 at 1285 feet. **(0.81 miles)**

Now head a little W of S downhill along the ridge towards Little Roughtor for about 150 yards to fairly wet ground. *Here you could continue to Roughtor Summit at 1325 feet to see the 43rd Wessex Division memorial plaque and a logan rock, returning to take the grassy track on towards Brown Willy. (adds about ¾ mile)* At this point you will see a reasonably clear grassy track heading east. Follow it, gradually bearing R downhill towards Brown Willy. The track winds, continuing down to a bridge over the infant De Lank River, and on to a wooden stile leading to the foot of Brown Willy. **(1.43 miles)** *Although on Open Access land, not normally waymarked, from here there are useful white waymarks all the way to Garrow, a legacy of the old permissive path days.*

Follow the clear but rocky and often muddy track then path, overall SE, up fairly steeply. *At 1.51 miles note an odd rock feature to your left, looking of ancient significance but actually where rock has been quarried for gateposts or boundary stones; one of the latter is off to your R.* You soon cross the remains of a boundary bank and continue up for ¼ mile to cross a high wooden stile (white WM). The final short stretch up to Brown Willy summit is steep, rocky, and sometimes very wet, with some quite awkward footing. At the top the northern cairn and trig point are at 15868/80003 at 1380 feet. **(2.00 miles)**

Views from the summit cairn of Brown Willy are panoramic and incorporate much of Cornwall. Along the north coast you can see Stepper Point by Padstow and Steeple Point beyond Bude. On the south coast you can see Rame Head just east of Plymouth and Black Head on St. Austell Bay. To the east you can see to Dartmoor and to the west you see Clay Country. Intriguingly, bearing in mind the massive cairns on Showery Tor and Brown Willy, you can also see the series of cairns on Brown Gelly, the two great cairns on Carburrow Tor and the cairns on Tolborough Tor and Alex Tor. I am sure there must be others.

Brown Willy Summit to Garrow – 2.02 miles

Continue roughly S along the Brown Willy Ridge, rocky for much of the way, passing white WMs, to the southern cairn at 15921/79701 at 2.21 miles. Skirt the cairn to the R and continue down and up to another outcrop (*very rocky, take care*). As you descend again, you will see ahead a gate and stile, just E of S. You reach the stile at 2.53 miles. Follow the white WM over the final outcrop, then downhill easy, passing yet more white WMs. At the WM at 2.76 miles bear R, roughly SW, to a track from abandoned Butterstor Farm to Fernacre **(3.00 miles)**

Were you to go L on the track, after about 550 yards you would reach the former Butterstor Farm and its unusual goose shelter. Were you to go R for the same distance, on to private Fernacre Farm land, you would find remains of a large lost medieval village.

Cross the track, cross a wooden footbridge and continue up to a wooden stile (white WM) on to Butterstor Downs at 3.03 miles. *From here it can get wet and footing may be difficult.* Follow the RH wire fence uphill. You come to a wooden stile (white WM) on your R at 15353/78552. **(3.15 miles)**

Here, the customary route follows the white WMs along the wire fence uphill over boggy tussocky ground to its end, crosses a boundary bank (white WM) at 3.30 miles and follows a clear but, in places, very muddy path, rounding a thorn tree set in furze and on down to a stile, 2 FBs over the De Lank River, and a second stile (white WM) to the foot of Garrow Downs. Then you would head diagonally uphill, very muddy at first, to where a track heads R into Garrow Farm at 3.83 miles. This, for what it's worth, would save 0.19 miles. However, the following route is on a PROW and, although slightly longer, avoids the very difficult ground on Butterstor – and it's more interesting.

Cross the stile into scrubby but easy ground and head downhill due W. You will cross 2 or 3 boundary banks, then an abandoned farmstead comes into view at the bottom of the valley. Head to the L (south) of it to find a clear path at 3.40 miles that bears R, with a pond and a ruined building on your R and a wire fence on your L, to a wooden stile (white WM on the other side) at 14932/78598. Cross the stile, then a substantial clapper bridge over the infant De Lank River, then a low 3-bar wooden barrier to the eastern foot of Garrow Downs. **(3.47 miles)**

Go forward on a clear path, heading roughly W uphill for about 35 yards to a grassy crossing track. Go L on the track, roughly S, following the line of the river. After ¼ mile the track bears R uphill, roughly W, then bears round S towards Garrow Farm. *Approaching Garrow Farm there are walls on your R, part of a lost medieval settlement.* Continue up to Garrow farmhouse, *note the cloam oven*, at 14600/77993 at 3.95 miles. *After the house, note the remains of a medieval longhouse on your R and a more recent barn on your L.* The track continues through a gap to a green sign on your L, where the alternative muddy Butterstor route comes in. **(4.02 miles)**

Garrow to Stannon Stone Circle – 3.63 miles

Go L on the track, which starts grassy but becomes rocky and rutted in places. *For 100 yards or so you are in a large hedged enclosure, probably part of the lost medieval settlement, later you will see remains of the bronze age settlement above you to your right.* The track meanders, roughly following the contour, around the southern end of the Garrow Downs ridge, starting SSW and gradually bearing round to W. *After a while you see the valley of the infant De Lank River below you, with Scribble Downs, Shallow Water Common and Hawk's Tor beyond.* At 4.46 miles, bear L (W) for 20 yards down to a redundant wooden stile (WM) at 4.47 miles to a coniferous plantation. The WM points too far R so cross the plantation slightly diagonally R to a small concrete bridge. Continue uphill, now out of the plantation, fairly steeply on a clear path up to a wooden stile (WM) at 4.53 miles leading to King Arthur's Downs. Follow the RH hedge uphill to its far end at 4.78 miles. There is now a fairly clear swathe ahead of you. Follow it, starting just S of W, bearing just N of W, passing a boundary stone at 5.04 miles, *King Arthur's Hall is now in view ahead, Roughtor and Brown Willy to your R.* King Arthur's Hall is at 12960/77625 **(5.13 miles)**

See Interest for a short detour to see 2 or 3 more stone circles near King Arthur's Hall.

Continue just N of W to the corner of a wire topped hedge, passing a boundary stone 100 yards off to your L at 5.19 miles, reaching the hedge at 5.26 miles. Follow the LH hedge, muddy in places, downhill with Candra in view ahead and, after a while, Alex Tor half R. At 12415/77754 at 5.48 miles, *note on your L a tall ladder stile. Here a path to goes L to Lower Candra on St. Breward Walk 03.* Near the bottom of the hill, pass Casehill off to your R and join the tarmac track from it at 5.72 miles, continuing down to cross a culverted stream at 5.76 miles, a small clapper off to your R. The track heads uphill fairly steeply, past at 5.81 miles on your R Candra and on your L Middle Candra. Shortly you can get off the tarmac and follow the RH hedge, still uphill. When the hedge bends R follow it for a few yards onto the open moorland of Treswallock Downs. **(5.92 miles)**

You can now see the summit of Alex Tor almost due N. Head for it uphill over fairly good ground. *If you are so inclined, there is quite a lot of antiquarian interest to look out for – standing stones, rows of small stones, boundary stones, hut circles, cairns and more. The distance noted at Alex Tor assumes that you have done some exploring.* Whatever you do, don't miss the very impressive remains of a kerbed cairn on the ridge of Treswallock Downs, just a little N of a massive rock, at 11727/78160 at 6.05 miles. It is probably best to approach the summit from the E and then head to its western end. There is a massive and unusual cairn, with a ring of upright slabs, at 11824/78738 at 970 feet on the summit. **(6.57 miles)**

After enjoying panoramic views from the Alex Tor summit, head NNE downhill to the NW corner of Camperdown Farm's enclosed fields at 6.81 miles. *Looking at the dry ground of Dinnever Hill in front of you, you could perhaps be tempted to head immediately NNE for Stannon stone circle. Don't be tempted, there is a lot of marshy ground in the way.* Instead go R on the track towards Fernacre, passing the entrance to Camperdown Farm at 7.03 miles, to the Middle Moor Cross at 12510/79301 at 7.17 miles. From here, looking just E of N, you will see a conifer plantation with a communications mast behind. Head downhill across Dinever Hill towards the mast. Soon you will see the western spoil heap of Stannon Pit. This is your final destination on this leg but do not head for it yet. Continue downhill and at 7.28 miles, cross two banks of an ancient field enclosure. At 7.39 miles, pass on your R a degraded cairn. Here, on your L, you will see a clear vehicle track. Follow this to the dry ground at the bottom at 7.44 miles. Continue up in the same direction, leaving marshy ground to your L and, after a little over 100 yards, you come to a broad crossing swathe. Go L on it, initially heading NNW for a white house across the valley. In front of the white house you will see the western end of a level spoil heap. Head for that and Stannon Stone Circle comes into view. Reach the circle at 12555/80011. **(7.65 miles)**

Stannon Stone Circle to the Roughtor Car Park – 2.10 miles

Leaving Stannon stone circle, head roughly ESE and follow the line of the hedge and fence around the Stannon Pit spoil heaps, staying initially on the higher and clearer ground and passing probable boundary stones at 7.82 miles and then crossing a boundary bank at 7.84 miles. When the hedge bends left to take a north-easterly line, stay on the lower ground near the hedge, where there are fairly clear paths, climbing gently through a bronze age settlement site, to see a succession of impressive hut circles. At 13128/79916 at 8.07 miles you pass a pair of standing stones; these may be remains of a cairn. The first striking hut circle, part of a larger settlement, is at 13239/79985 at 8.17 miles. The most impressive hut circle is at 13318/80079. **(8.25 miles)**

Now head more steeply uphill roughly NE towards Roughtor, which is now in view. *Looking back over the main china clay spoil heap, you will see on the horizon what at first look like rocky outcrops or even quoits. These are actually rocks put in place by Imerys or their predecessors English China Clays. Near the top Roughtor and Brown Willy are now in full view.* You reach the top of Louden Hill at a rocky outcrop at 13754/80314 at 1040 feet at 8.61 miles. Continue forward a short distance to the Logan Rock at 13756/80409. **(8.67 miles)**

From the Logan Rock you can clearly see the car park at the end of the walk. You will find it easiest to stay on the higher ground, seeking out the better going. You will continue to pass through settlements, with enclosures, hut circles, low standing stones and boundary banks. Continue to the clapper bridge and back up through the two gates to the car Park. **(9.75 miles)**

If you didn't do so at the start of the walk, you may like, before returning to the car park, to take a closer look at the monument to Charlotte Dymond at 13669/81770. Do not try to take the most direct route to it as a fence and marshy ground intervene. Instead, continue to the clapper bridge and then head back left to a wooden stile to the memorial enclosure, distance not included.