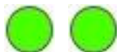


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Minions to The Cheesewring and The Hurlers

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| Starting point and OS Grid reference | Minions free car park (SX 262713) |
| Ordnance Survey map | OS Explorer 109 – Bodmin Moor |
| Distance | 4,5 miles |
| Date of Walk | 21 September 2016 |
| Traffic light rating |  |

Introduction: This walk from Minions takes you on a circuit past some of the most interesting features on this eastern part of Bodmin Moor. There is a lot to see up here and I should apologise for leaving out so much but time did not permit a full itinerary. However you get to see well preserved mining infrastructure, amazing rock formations and a unique series of stone circles. The plural is significant!

As you gaze around, you will see many old mine buildings. This walk visits just two of them.

Unconnected with the Minions animated film (although the residents tried - in the interests of tourism!), this is a tiny hamlet high on the eastern side of Bodmin Moor and the starting point of this moorland wander. It came into being between 1863 and 1880 in support of local mining, railway and quarrying industries. There is not a great deal there save pub, eateries, shop and public toilets and some accommodation.

The Phoenix Mine was a copper and tin mine which began production in 1836 and continued until 1898. A considerable amount of the building and chimney remain, ivy clad on one side, which gives it a somewhat romantic air today, although the mining was anything but. The end of the walk takes you to Houseman's Engine House, also part of the Phoenix Mine set-up and now open as a heritage centre with some interesting information about mining and the local area.

Metal and quarried stone was taken by the Liskeard and Caradon Railway to Looe for onward transmission by boat. The railway opened in 1844 but closed in 1916 because the mines had been exhausted.

The Cheesewring is an incredible stack of large flat granite boulders on Stowes Hill. No doubt the product of natural deposition and erosion, they look as though they have been deliberately stacked with a pillar to support an overhang. In fact there are several stacks on this hill but The Cheesewring is the one which stands out.

The Hurlers is the name given to three stone circles in a line on Bodmin Moor. They were first excavated in the 1930s and date from the Neolithic or Early Bronze age. They come with an obligatory legend namely that they are individuals turned to stone for playing hurling (an ancient game) on a Sunday. Three circles so closely situated is something of a rarity.

At the time of my visit, excavations were ongoing to find a possible fourth circle and some stones did seem to have been found.

There is no easy way to describe the best way to Minions as it depends where you are starting from. However if it is convenient, I would suggest turning off the A30 at Bolventor (close to Jamaica Inn). This is a complicated junction but find the road signposted to Siblyback Lake and follow this road for some miles, until you reach a 'T' junction, where Minions is signposted. Pass the car park signposted for The Hurlers and through Minions itself. The car park where I started is just out of the village on the left.

Start: With your back to the road, bear to the right of the car park and twenty yards or so right of an old barn.

Almost as you come level with the barn, turn right along the course of the old railway track, obvious by its wide level profile. Across the valley to the right is Caradon Hill, with its radio masts and mine ruins. In the distance on the left you can make out the quarry on Stowes Hill and the Cheesewring itself.

The wide track soon reduces to a more conventional footpath by four large boulders and shortly afterwards, the path splits. Take the right fork and follow the path to the road at SX 265717.

Cross the road and follow the broad track. Quickly take a right fork heading towards the remains of the Phoenix Mine's engine house.

Having looked round the mine building, with your back to the ivy covered side, walk straight ahead and you will see a marker post ahead of you with white arrows. Walk down the left hand side of the stone building ahead of you. Bear left at its far corner, following the direction arrow.

The path drops down to a broad grassy track. Turn right.

Through a gate, bear left to follow the yellow footpath arrow, to a gate at the end of the field. Beyond it, keep to the left hand boundary of the field, and continue around its corner (this is to avoid a diagonal crossing of it).

Look out for a gate on the left hand side, about half way along the field. It was well secured when I did the walk but along side it is a wooden ladder arrangement, looking more like a section of fence (SX 271720). Cross this and follow the left hand boundary of the field beyond.

At SX 273720, arrive at Newlands Farm. Head right to follow the concrete drive, until it divides and take the left turn.

Follow the drive past the right hand side of some wooden barns (there is a yellow arrow on the barn if you look closely).

Follow the drive to Knowle Farm, where you turn left, past the industrial buildings and the cream farmhouse. The track then forks. Take the right fork, indicated by the yellow arrow. Past another farmhouse and you will see a post with a further yellow direction arrow.

Go through the gate into the field beyond walk roughly a third of the field's width from the left boundary and keeping well to the left of some power lines, which gradually angle off to the right.

Head down the field to where it dips into the trees. Go into the woods where a yellow arrow indicates your route. It is obvious on the ground. Cross a stream via a wooden bridge.

Exit the woods via a stile and bear right to follow the trodden path.

Cross a double stile (stone and wood) and head for a gate and stile opposite which you can see.

After crossing another field, you reach a lane (SX 268732). Turn left and follow it to Henwood. There is a handy bench for lunch on the tiny village green.

From the village green, turn left to follow the road sign for "Sharptor ½ Mile".

Follow the road out of the village and when it bends left, turn right along the dead end road for half a mile. You reach public footpath sign indicating straight on. The land to the left is Open Access so you can really set off up Stowes Hill (to the left) where you like. However, in view of a notice asking people to stick to the marked path, I went on a few yards further. At SX 257731 I found a green post which obviously had fingerposts attached. These were laid on the floor. As these looked new, I assume they had been deliberately removed, as I doubt they had all blown off!

In any event, I turned left here and the GPX route up Stowes Hill is based on the track of the route I actually walked.

Once you reach the summit, there are lots of interesting rock formations and you can see the most impressive of these below - The Cheesewring.

The onward route is to the right of The Cheesewring. Anywhere else risks falling over a quarry edge!

As you get to a more level section of land, join a broad grassy track and turn left.

At SX 258721, the track divides into three. Take the left route.

The Hurlers soon become clear. From them, I followed the track to the road and turned left, just out of curiosity, to see the hamlet. However, if you wish, you can head over to the nearest mine building you can see. I headed there by taking the track left out of the hamlet, passing the public toilets.

This mine building is Houseman's Engine Shed. Originally built in 188, it was restored in 1991 as a heritage centre. This is alongside the car park where you started.

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