

An accessible walk: Yelverton to Shaugh Tunnel on Drakes Trail

Dawn Williamson. Moorland Guides and Wheeled Access Group.

This is an out and back walk beginning and ending in Yelverton though you can join it along the route in a couple of places. It is 3.7 miles from Yelverton to Shaugh Tunnel. Most of the route has tarmac although there is a very short section that can get muddy. It is suitable for cyclists, people pushing pushchairs, and those using electric wheelchairs and mobility scooters. It has been reccied by the Wheeled Access Group. There are some double gates in one part to prevent cattle, sheep and ponies moving between commons and into villages. These have trombone handles but might be difficult to use for someone using a mobility scooter.



This walk is part of Drakes Trail, a 21 miles cycle and walking route linking Tavistock and Plymouth. It takes its name from Sir Francis Drake as it links places featured in his life. It was opened for cyclists and walkers in 2009.

It is also part of National Cycle Route 27, a 102 mile route which begins in Ilfracombe in North Devon and goes to Plymouth. You will be following the NCN 27 signs along this walk.

You can park outside the shops in Yelverton. There are plenty of places to obtain food and drink for your walk. Its church dates back to the 13th century and is worth a visit. It was a popular tourist destination in the 19th century as a gateway to Dartmoor and it hosted a RAF airbase during the 2nd World War.

Follow the track southwards alongside the public toilets or on the side road. There is additional parking here. You will soon see the NCN 27 sign which leads onto the trail. At this point you enter the woods with Drakes Leat on your left. Also known as the Plymouth Leat it was completed in 1591 with the aim of taking water from the River Meavy to the navy and firefighters in Plymouth but most of the water ended up being used by Sir Francis Drake for his mills. It has not been used since Burrator Reservoir was built.



In some places you can see Devonport Leat to the west of trail. It was completed in 1802 to



bring water to the docks in Devonport. Although water flows in it above Burrator Reservoir, it is now dry in this section.

After about 2 miles you go through the section with the double gates and about 100m which can be a bit muddy after rain. You soon get views of Dartmoor to your left and the trees are replaced with gorse, heather and grass. There is a short section of old granite pavers from the original horse drawn tramway which brought granite from Kings tor and Princetown to Plymouth. It was opened in 1823. Originally it had iron

rails fitted to granite sleepers and it is these sleepers you can see today. Look for the two holes which were drilled to attach a pole to the iron rails. This tramway had a 4 foot 6 inch gauge.

The new South Devon and Tavistock railway with a standard 4ft 8 inch gauge opened in 1859 after a delay due to the Crimean War. Much of this walking route follows this railway. It linked Plymouth and Tavistock and was opened in 1859. It closed in 1962.

After 2.3 miles you will reach the road, turn left, and go downhill into the village of Clearbrook. It is quite a steep hill on a public road, so care is needed. Clearbrook has a pub if refreshment is required. A halt for the South Devon and Tavistock Railway was built here in 1928 but was closed in 1962. There is also a small carpark if you wish to start your walk here. At the end of the village follow the signs and turn right up a short uphill stretch of the track. It is then gently downhill to Shaugh Tunnel.



Shaugh tunnel is also known as Drakes Leat Tunnel or Leighbeer Tunnel. It is 300 yards long, carved out of solid rock. It was designed by I.K. Brunel. There are usually drops of water dripping from the roof and although it is lit it is helpful to carry a torch so people coming in the other direction can see you. During the 2nd World War the top of the tunnel was used as a base for defensive guns. These were used to protect RAF Harrowbeer on the outskirts of Yelverton.

Just after you exit the tunnel there is a bench on your left with lovely views across the fields. You then return back through the tunnel and on to Yelverton using the same path.

If you would like any further information about the Wheeled Access Group, please visit www.dartmoorwags.org.uk

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