

Bolt Tail and Burleigh Dolts

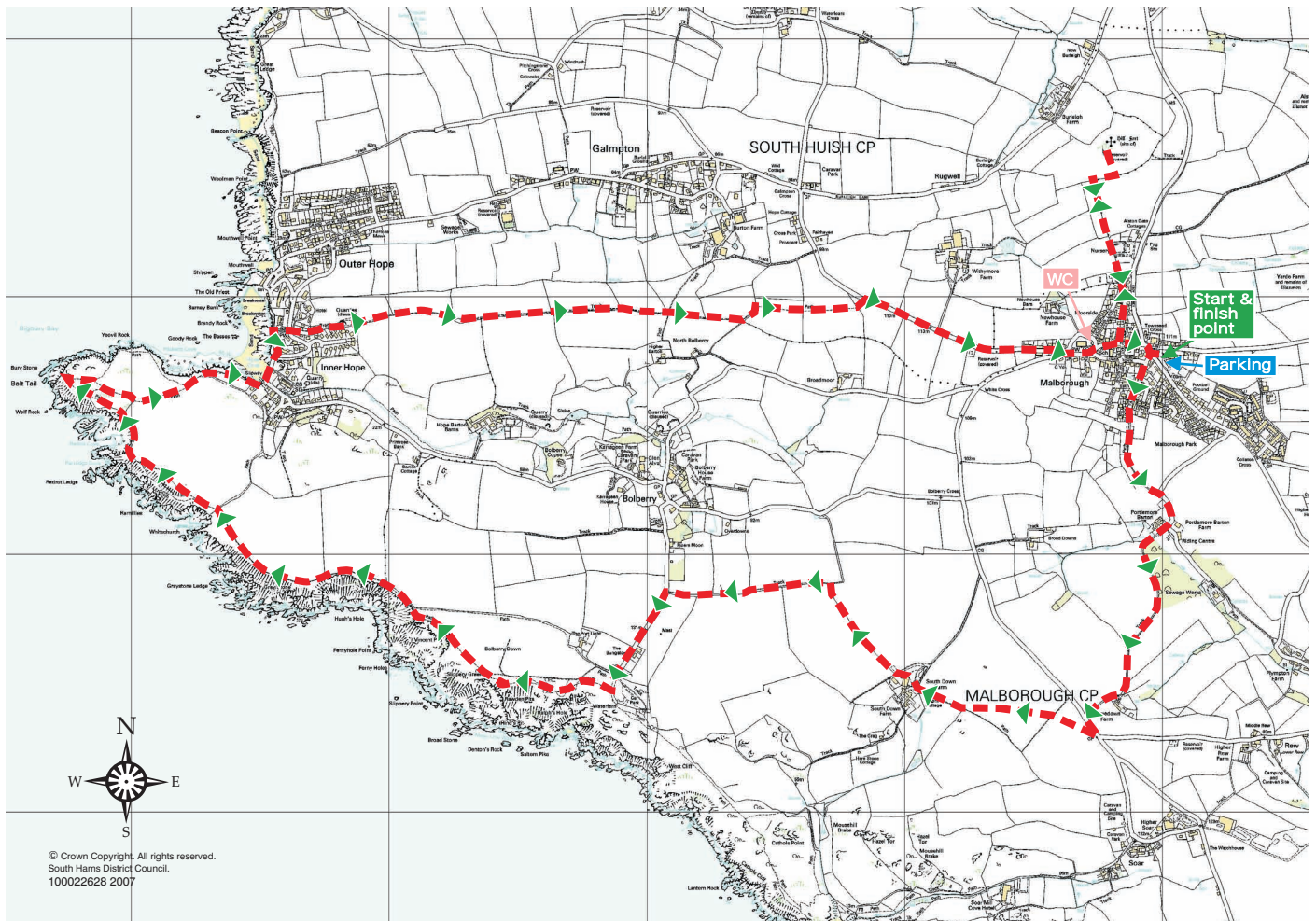
Following in the footsteps of our forefathers, this walk takes in the spectacular sites of two enclosures, dating back to the Iron Age, and the pathways and ancient green lanes in between, including a glorious stretch of coast.

Start:	Village Hall car park, Malborough
Distance:	8.75 miles
Circular Walk:	Yes
Grade:	Moderate to Strenuous
Terrain:	Coastal footpath; field footpaths with some mud in wet weather; surfaced road; green lane; route fairly even underfoot overall.
Obstacles & Steep Gradients:	5 stiles (4 can be bypassed), 4 flights of steps. 1 steep ascent.
Public transport:	Bus service 162 between Kingsbridge and Hope Cove, twice a day Monday to Saturday.
Refreshment stops:	Malborough: Royal Oak 01548 561481; New Inn 01548 561320; Churchill's Bistro 01548 561405. At Bolberry Down: Port Light Hotel serves drinks, cream teas, lunches 01548 561384.
Toilets:	Public toilets by post office, Higher Town, Malborough
Parking:	Village Hall car park, Malborough. Free.
Accommodation:	Please contact Salcombe Tourist Information Centre 01548 843927 www.salcombeinformation.co.uk
Other facilities:	Public payphone and post office by church, Higher Town, Malborough
OS map:	Explorer 0L20
Grid Ref:	SX 710398

Directions

1. Leave car park via footpath towards filling station.
2. Cross top of Collaton Rd and turn left along Higher Town into '20mph Zone'.
3. Just past the New Inn turn right down Chapel Lane. At junction, cut across to left and follow 'Public Footpath' fingerpost to right. Path leads along field edges to kissing gate on the left into a field – the site of Burleigh Dolts earthworks.
4. Retrace your steps to the village. At the top of Chapel Lane turn left.
5. At the main road junction turn right down Collaton Rd then right again down Lower Town, and bear left down Well Hill.
6. Just before the road end, bear left onto public footpath.
7. Head straight on in front of farmhouse at Portlemore Barton, signed 'Furzedown 1 ½m', and follow track.
8. Turn right up track by Furzedown Farm. Turn left along road then right after 100m onto footpath across two fields.
9. At far field edge bear right along field margin to field corner. Cross over stone stile, go straight on, then follow yellow waymarker left. At far side of farm, follow fingerpost along footpath.
10. At next junction turn left along Jacob's Lane signed for Bolberry Down. At the road turn left.
11. Cross cattle grid at Bolberry Down, go straight on for 50m, then turn right onto coast path at 'acorn' waymarker.
12. Continue to follow the coast path along the cliffs to tip of promontory at Bolt Tail Hillfort.
13. Loop back out of hillfort and follow coast path down to Inner Hope.
14. At bottom of steps by slipway turn left along road. After 100m bear left signed 'Outer Hope ½m'. After a further 100m turn right signed 'Public Footpath Galmpton 1m'. Climb up past church, cross road, and continue up private drive and then field footpath up along broad ridge for 1 ½ miles.
15. Path crosses field corner and stile to left onto road. Turn right and follow road back to Malborough. Cut straight through churchyard and along Higher Town back to main road and car park.





Further Interest

Heritage

Standing on the site at Burleigh Dolts, it is not easy to make out the banks and ditches of the Iron Age earthwork that once stood here. It is easy though to see why this spot was chosen. The views over the over the surrounding landscape are commanding – and if this enclosure was ever threatened, it would have been impossible to approach in stealth.

The earthwork here was quite complex, with three enclosures, more or less one inside another. It is thought that it was probably built in the middle to late Iron Age, between 350 BC and 50 AD. The problem with prehistoric times though of course, is that there was no written history, and so it is hard to pin things down for certain. In other times and places, much has been learnt from artefacts found in graves. Inconveniently, Britons in the Iron Age didn't seem to bury their dead, and so we miss out on this kind of evidence as well.

However, historical detective work and technology offer some clues. Burleigh Dolts may have been used by the Dumnonii tribe. This group occupied much of the Westcountry, including all of Devon and Cornwall, and were a fairly anarchic tribe. They did not use money, were quite scattered and decentralised, and were known for their friendliness to strangers.

A geophysical survey was recently carried out at Burleigh Dolts. This uses ground- penetrating radar to provide a sort of x- ray of the earth that gives an idea of what lies beneath. The picture it provided showed all sorts of interesting and odd shapes hidden in the soil. There are hints of archaeological remains of possible buildings as well as the ramparts and ditches, and what may even be two Bronze Age barrows.



Centuries of weather and agriculture have not been kind to Burleigh Dolts. The post- WWII drive for agricultural 'improvement' hit it particularly hard, and many of the banks and ditches were bulldozed. Now, however, the site has been fenced, and returned to pasture by the present farmer to prevent any further damage from ploughing.

The hillfort at Bolt Tail is thought to have been constructed earlier than that at Burleigh Dolts, perhaps around 500–600 BC. This was a busy period of fort- building around the country, particularly in southern England.

The ramparts are clearly visible as you approach Bolt Tail. The people here saved themselves the trouble of raising a bank right around a site by just walling off the whole tip of the promontory. Even so, it must have taken an immense investment of labour to build these ramparts, using only the primitive hand tools of the time.

The growth in earthwork building at this time in history may have been prompted by increasing population and conflict. However, it seems likely that not all enclosures were permanently occupied. Archaeological evidence from other sites suggests that some sites may have been used for gatherings for trade and exchange, for religious activities, and for storage. Bolt Tail may have been one of these. Certainly it would have been a pretty blustery spot to live all the time.

The main kind of structure built by Iron Age peoples for homes, shelter and storage was the roundhouse. This construction had low walls and a tall conical thatched roof. Fires could be lit inside, with the smoke escaping through the thatch. There may well have been a small clutch of roundhouses within the enclosures of both Bolt Tail and Burleigh Dolts.

There has never been an archaeological dig at either Bolt Tail or Burleigh Dolts, and it is fairly likely to stay that way – so we are left with many tantalising clues and mysteries.

Hope Cove was in past times a centre of smuggling. It was a long haul to the village for the Revenue men based at Plymouth and Salcombe – especially as the road to Hope was in notoriously bad condition back in the 18th and 19th centuries. This usually gave the 'free traders' plenty of time to get their booty ashore and well hidden before the lawmen arrived.

All Saints Church in Malborough is known in some quarters as the 'cathedral of the South Hams'. Its spire can be seen from many



miles away. The site of the church was used in 1588 for a fire beacon to send warning of the Spanish Armada's approach.

Wildlife

The sites at Burleigh Dolts and Bolt Tail are both home to the skylark. The size of a small thrush, the skylark has a raised crest on its head. However, it is more likely to be seen than heard. Its beautiful rich liquid song is a classic sound of the countryside in spring and summer. The skylark sings in a long 'songflight', and by following the sound you can sometimes make out the source – usually a small dot hovering high overhead.

This is an ideal walk for seeing birds of prey. You will commonly see a kestrel hovering on reddish- brown wings above the grassy cliffs. Even in howling winds, an airborne kestrel can remain absolutely stationary while it scans the ground below for voles and mice.

A sleek dark grey shape slicing through the sky along the cliffs may well be a Peregrine falcon. This most aerodynamic of birds is a formidable hunter, preying on other birds.

Britain's answer to the condor is the buzzard. On the inland stretches of this walk you will often see this large brown bird on the wing, sailing majestically on the thermals.

Along the coast path grow clusters of yarrow, with feathery leaves on a dark green- blue stem, and flat umbrellas of white florets. There are drifts of pink thrift, the spinach- like leaves of sea beet, and the low, bright red and yellow flowers of bird's foot trefoil. Toadflax also grows here, its yellow lipped flowers massed on straight stem- spikes.

Tamarisk has been planted in front of the tiny St Clements Church at Hope. This shrubby tree has small feathery leaves, reddish- orange twigs, and soft pink flowers in the summer. It was introduced to Britain from the Mediterranean around the 16th century, and now often grows wild along the coast. It is sometimes planted by conservationists to stabilise shingle beaches.



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