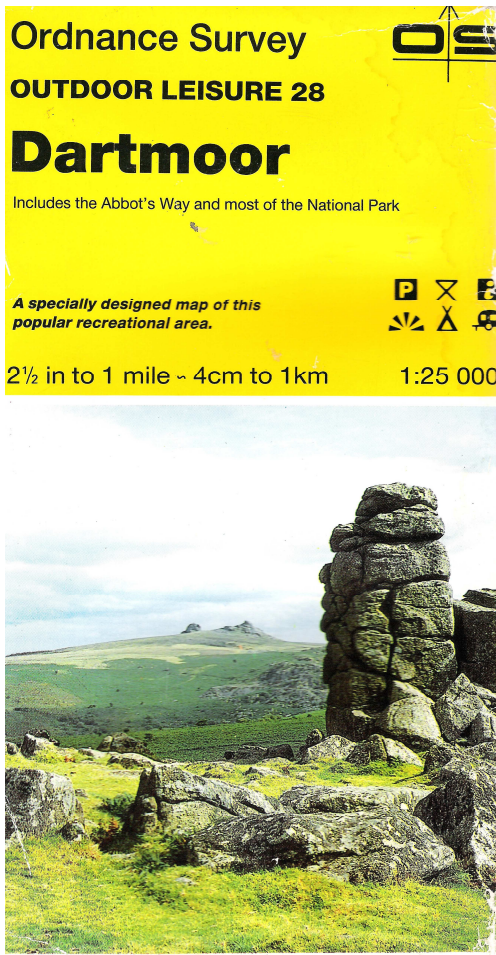


## *Touring amidst the tors*

*John Cole*

1984 saw the publication of the 'A' or First Edition of Outdoor Leisure 28 Dartmoor. 'Includes the Abbot's Way and most of the National Park' is displayed on the cover but not, sadly, Harry Titcombe's whinchat,<sup>1</sup> instead a photographic view of Hay Tor from Hound Tor.



The advent of this map, long awaited by regular walkers and others in south Devon, attracted the attention of the local press who had nothing but praise for it. At the article's outset it is pointed out that 'being late in the field – six other National Parks having already benefited from the useful series of 2½" scale – wrinkles have been worked out and Dartmoor can now claim as perfect a map as is possible to achieve'. Indeed the Western Morning News article by Brian Le Messurier was captioned *Wrinkle-free Dartmoor*. There followed four columns of unstinting praise, the sole criticism being the use of the term 'boundary work' in place of the local 'reave' – an ancient earth and stone bank.

Needless to say such acclaim left me with a spring in my step and head in the air having contributed the field work on component 1:10,000 maps<sup>2</sup> in 1979.<sup>3</sup> But deflation quickly followed when my attention was drawn to the opinion of the late Eric Hemery on the validity of certain names regarding spelling, position, existence or omission.

Moreover, Eric had followed up his celebrated *High Dartmoor – land and people* in 1983 by authenticating placenames and ancient tracks on Harvey's 1:40,000 map of Dartmoor.<sup>4</sup> The copy I have claims a field survey of 1982 based on air photography of 1975, revised 1985. The significance of this information becomes clear later.

It was not until some ten years after that I attempted an investigation and indeed adjudication of the names position and used as a starting point the 1976 reprint of William Crossing's 1912 *Guide to Dartmoor* which Brian Le Messurier in his forward describes as 'the masterpiece'. Crossing himself adds to the title *a*

<sup>1</sup> John Paddy Browne, *Map cover art*, Southampton: Ordnance Survey, 1991, 142.

<sup>2</sup> SX56SE, NE, SX57SE, NE and NW.

<sup>3</sup> See *Sheetlines* 55,11 for my account of this work.

<sup>4</sup> *Sheetlines* 47.

*topographic description of the forest and commons* and it is probably fair to say that the 530 pages of information on every inch of the moor has never been bettered and probably never will be.

Crossing makes some fifteen OS name references and states at the outset that *the latest OS maps ... are the only ones that are reliable. Those published prior to about 1884 are of very little use, being full of inaccuracies*. This I'm afraid would include Old Series one-inch sheet 25.<sup>5</sup> Crossing goes on to say that he has consulted OS regarding names at the time of 1880s revision or survey agreeing, correcting or adding and also excuses what he considered to be a 'large number' of purely local or not generally known names absent from the map at that time. But then on pages 125 and 212 he draws attention to a couple of notorious mistakes; the position of Mistor Pan (a rock basin on Great Mis Tor) and Cawsand (Cosdon) Hill and Beacon, both appearing uncorrected until the 1970s.

Returning to Hemery, he was almost certainly correct regarding the majority of omissions and, probably, spellings. But OS goes by common usage at the time of mapping and, as the Dartmoor National Park authorities pointed out, there is little to be gained by reverting to spellings of long ago. Nevertheless, Eric complained somewhat bitterly to OS, in effect accusing it of 'inflicting' incorrect spellings or positioning of names on an unsuspecting public.

Regarding up-to-datedness OL28 was at a considerable disadvantage compared with the Harvey map. The compilation legend states: *These maps have been compiled from 1:10,560 or 1:10,000 scale maps published 1954-82 which were made from surveys dated 1904-80*. This can be broken down to: Bypassed 1:2500 mapping of 1904 and 1936 mainly to the north, north-west and north-east of the moor; 1:10,560 revision of 1950 south of the 80 grid line with 1951, 52, 54, 57, 60 and 61 1:2500 revision surrounding the remainder; 1964 1:10,560 probably resurvey to the north of the 80 grid line and 1979 1:10,000 resurvey to the south with a good deal of revision of the c.1950s 1:2500 for the major changes. Up to 1979 the basic 1:10,560 and 1:10,000 areas had expanded for economic reasons (though sometimes unwisely) but leaving at 1:2500 the villages of Princetown and Postbridge. Provisional 1:25,000 maps covered the moor from 1948 but the 1950 revision at 1:10,560 led to the appearance of regular 1:25,000s SX56, 57, 65, 66 and 67.<sup>6</sup>

The net result are print differences either side of 80 north, some of which are still apparent on 2005 B1 edition of OL28, although they are of no great moment. But an inconsistency over leat depiction and naming may be. Having a personal interest in this subject, as well as mines and railways on the moor, I added these to a list I sent to OS in 1996. This they forwarded to Dartmoor National Park, eventually sending me a response.

Rather to my disappointment DNP declined to comment on omissions stating that there had to be *a balance with text and ability to view contours etc.*

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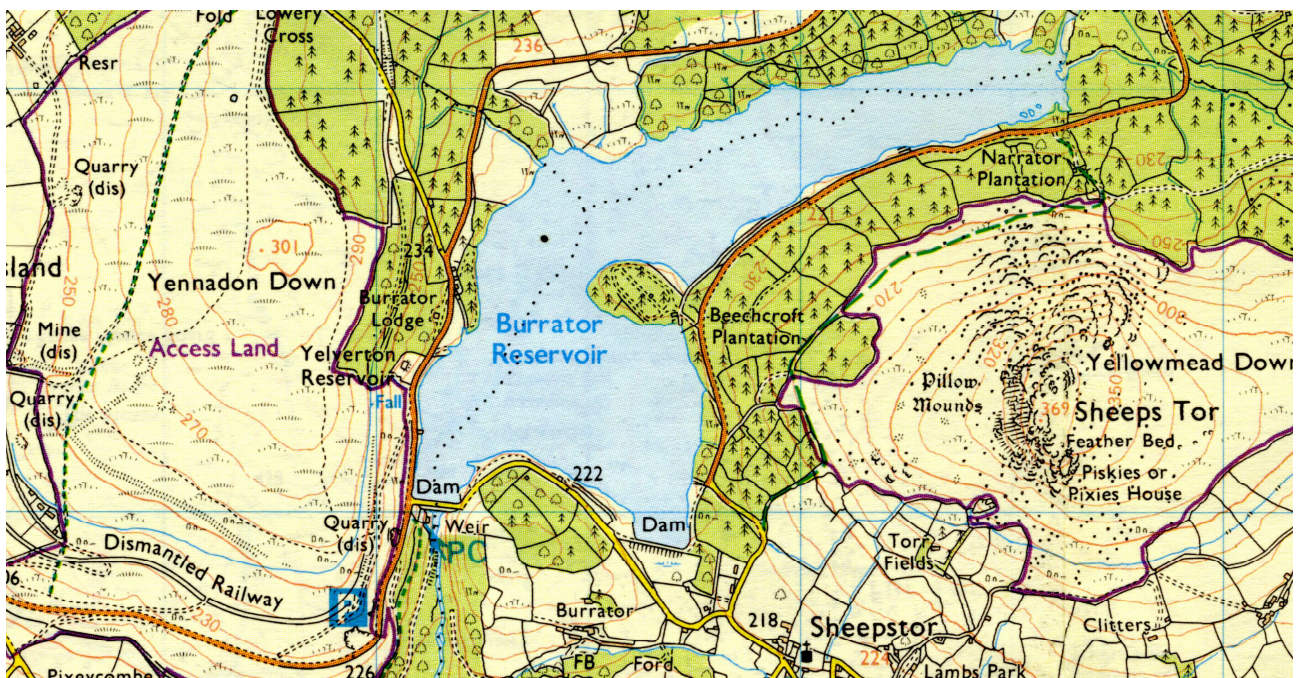
<sup>5</sup> *Sheetlines* 76.

<sup>6</sup> Described in *Sheetlines* 47 and 69.



when in fact most omissions (agreed by Crossing and Hemery) fall in empty spaces. However the Park went into the rest in considerable detail, with the majority of the comment not in my favour but much inclined to the status quo. In all fairness I could appreciate the reasons for this. But then in a couple of cases OS went against DNP opinion by introducing a couple of disused mine names and adding 'ruin' in brackets to half-a-dozen moorland locations on the B edition. Against this there appeared a leat name for which I could find no trace; a mine name which appears difficult to justify and a spelling of a tor which reverts to that on Old Series one-inch sheet 25.

There is now a certain irony in this as the 2006 version of the Harvey map (now at 1:50,000) adopts current spelling, acknowledges Eric Hemery's contribution to the old map and lists 28 names with their old and current spelling. Regarding leats and mines there is a degree of inconsistency on both OL28 B2 edition and Harvey 2006. Whereas the 1983 Harvey had indicated dry leats, only OL28 now does so, though due to compilation date range the depiction inconsistency persists.



*Extract from OL28, A3 edition published 1995*

Inconsistency apart, I still feel proud of my contribution to OL28 and happy to field brickbats. Finally, two grid references: 5468 (*Yennadon Down, west of reservoir, above*) where my first glimpse of New Popular 187 during a school exercise inspired me to pursue an OS career. And just across the valley is 5668 (*Yellowmead Down, to the east*) where nearly thirty years later working on SX56NE, I viewed that very spot.