

legends & literature

Stand beside **Dozmary Pool** in the twilight and you might feel the spirit of King Arthur rising with the mist. It was here, according to legend, that faithful Sir Bedivere returned the sword *Excalibur* to the Lady in the Lake, and stories of the mythical King have been associated with the moor for centuries.

Other ghosts lurk here also. Jan Tregagle, an unpopular 17th century steward at **Lanhydrock**, was condemned for eternity to empty the bottomless pool with a leaking shell.



Nearby, across the moor, stand the stone circles of the **Hurlers** – said to be men frozen in time for playing sport on the Sabbath.

Other stories are not so far-fetched. Daphne du Maurier describes the smugglers of **Jamaica Inn** plying their illicit trade in the 1700s, whilst E V Thompson's *Catch the Wind* looks at the moor through the eyes of mining families in the 19th century.

Truth is sometimes stranger than fiction. The hermit Daniel Gumb lived in a cave-like structure beneath the **Cheesewring** (above) around 1735 and his mathematical carvings are there to be seen. At **Warleggan** stands the isolated church (below) where, in the 1930s, the eccentric Revd Densham preached to cardboard cut-outs after his parishioners deserted him. Near **Roughtor** a

monument to Charlotte Dymond marks the spot where her murdered body was found in 1844. Young Matthew Weeks was hanged at Bodmin Gaol for the crime, but was he guilty?



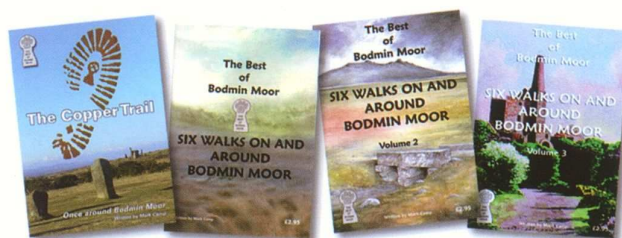
walking the moor

Visitors must remember that the moorlands, though appearing wild, are part of managed farmland. Even common land is privately owned, and where there is no designated access permission must be sought from the farmers, landowners, and Commoners Associations.

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Guard against all risk of fire. Leave gates as found. Keep dogs under control, and disturbance to a minimum. Keep to public paths, use gates and stiles to cross hedges and walls. Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone. Take your litter home. Help to keep all water clean. Respect the rights of landowners and others in the countryside.

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BODMIN MOOR

landscape, legends & history



landscape & wildlife

Rising beyond the marsh... pointing his great fingers to the sky, was a crag like a split hand coming sheer out of the moor; his surface moulded in granite as though sculptured, his slope a venomous grey. So this was Kilmar Tor...

Daphne du Maurier's description in *Jamaica Inn* captures the drama of the tors, whose granite has been weathered into precarious towers of rock – chief amongst which is the extraordinary **Cheesewring**. These stones are home to ravens, ferns, lichens and mosses, while on the clutter-strewn slopes below, linnets and stonechats thrive amongst gorse and stunted thorn trees.

In the open moorland are marshes and mires, treacherous to the unwary walker. Here rare plants flourish – bog orchids, coral necklace, and needle spike-rush – patrolled by lapwings and snipe. Golden plover and curlew prefer the grazed grassland, and skylarks flit amongst the grass tussocks. Look out for orchids – like the heath-spotted orchid (*above*, with a marsh fritillary butterfly) or the scarce frog orchid, found on the slopes of **Colliford Lake**.

On the moorland fringes, in wooded river valleys and disused mine shafts, are bat roosts – including the rare lesser and greater horseshoe bats. The **De Lank** and **Fowey** rivers are also nationally important territories for otters, and at **Golitha Falls** National Nature Reserve (*left*) you might catch a glimpse of great spotted woodpeckers and grey wagtails.

And, somewhere on the moor, is the mythic Beast of Bodmin – an escaped puma, panther or just pure fiction?



archaeological heritage

Climb to the summit of **Stowe's Hill**, and you've left the 21st century behind. For more than 6000 years man has lived, worked and died upon the Moor, and he's left evidence of his passing on every tor and in every valley that you can see.

In 4000 BC the view before you would have been very different. Birch, oak and hazel trees would fill the valleys and much of the exposed moorland would be covered with scrubby hazel. But nomadic Mesolithic hunter-gatherers are moving in, and you can see columns of smoke rising above the treetops from their tent camps.

Move on a thousand years or so, and you can hear the sound of stone axe on timber. Gaps in the woodland are appearing as early Neolithic man settles down and starts to clear trees to provide pastures and fuel. All around you, on the hilltop, he's busy building fortified stone ramparts about 3m high (*Stowes Pound, below*) and inside he's cleared stone platforms for about 100 wooden huts. In the distance, similar hillforts are taking shape on **Roughtor**, **Tregarrick** and other tors.

From 2500 BC stone tools are being replaced with metal implements, and man is no longer building just for shelter, but also for ritual. To the west and south, down on **Craddock Moor**, teams of labourers are erecting circles of standing stones – **the Hurlers** – for important occasions. Other settlements are doing the same, and ceremonial stones are going up all over the moor – on **King Arthur's Downs**, around **Roughtor** and **Garrow Tor**, on **Trehudreth Downs** – many of them in line with sacred hills and valleys.

Due south is the chieftain's burial mound of **Rillaton Barrow**; inside is a stone cist containing a skeleton, a bronze dagger and a ribbed cup of gold.



By 1000BC Bodmin Moor is being extensively farmed – thousands of thatched round houses, with outbuildings and walled fields, are scattered around **Roughtor** and **Louden Hill**, on **Craddock Moor** to your west, and on the slopes beneath **Sharp Tor** (*left*).

But there's a change in the air – the climate's getting colder, and the soil's not so fertile. The farms are abandoned and the moor is used only for summer grazing – you can see a few people herding cattle and sheep beyond **Kilmar Tor** to the north. Activity has shifted to the river valleys, where you'll

find the gullies of tin streaming works.

Fast forward again to the Middle Ages, and a few farmers are returning, building hamlets along **Witheybrook** below you. They're farming in strip fields now, clearly seen on **Bray Down** and **Brown Willy**, and many of these farms will be occupied into the 21st century.

By the mid-18th century the moor is getting busier. All around you, man has started digging for tin and copper, first in surface works, and then in the 19th century deep shaft mines of **Phoenix** and **Caradon**, topped with smoking engine houses and clattering tramways. The marsh at **Witheybrook** turns copper-coloured, with women and children washing ore, while **Cheesewring** quarry-workers (*right*) blast and hammer up until the 1930s.



