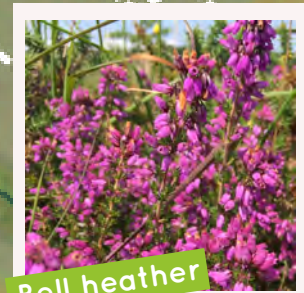




B3180

Colaton Raleigh Common

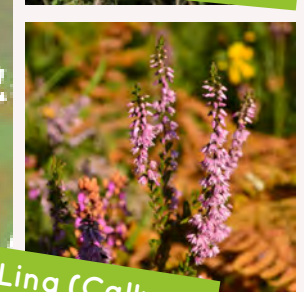
Woodbury Castle Hillfort



Bell heather



Crossleaved heath



Ling (Calluna)

VIEW P

CASTLE P

2

Woodbury Common

4

5

1 P

FOUR FIRS

P

MODEL AIRFIELD

6

P

UPHAMS

7

8

10

Bicton Common

9

Lookout Copse

Gibraltar Stone



Stonechat



PEBBLEBED QUEST

THE THREE COMMONS

Take a picture during your quest and share #pebblebedquest

PEBBLEBED QUEST

THE THREE COMMONS



Start at Four Firs
Some gentle sloping sections and steps
3km (approx 90min) with optional loop +1km (+30mins)

Four Firs is a popular place to start exploring the heaths, just off the B3179 and B3180.

On each corner of the crossroad is a barrow or funeral mounds dating from Neolithic to late Bronze Age. These ancient monuments were modified in the 18th or 19th Century and planted with pine trees, giving the junction its name, Four Firs!

1. From the carpark entrance cross the road with care and follow the waymarked path (East Devon Way) towards Woodbury Castle.

If you have time build yourself a shelter from the fallen branches lying here.

You are now on Woodbury common. Though many people call the entire heath Woodbury common, it is only one of a whole collection of commons. During this part of the quest you will also discover Colaton Raleigh and Bicton commons too!

2. Continue north until you reach the castle car park, cross the car park and enter the hillfort using steps up and over the ancient ramparts.

3. Leave the hillfort through the sloped gap in the banks to the east. Walk down the track through the plantation planted with Douglas fir and Corsican pine and out onto the heath.

Woodbury Castle is an impressive example of the building skills of Early Man who would have created the impressive earthworks and ditches using only wooden or bone tools. Today the inside of the hillfort is wooded, providing welcome shade. Some of the mature trees have been managed and standing dead wood left to provide habitat for insects. Recent work has taken place to repair eroded banks to protect the monument for the future.

Under your feet lie up to 30 metres of pebblebeds – layers of rounded pebbles in red sandstone. The pebbles were deposited by a huge river flowing through a desert during the Early Triassic (240 Million years ago). Topped with a thin layer of acidic infertile soil which is ideal to support heathland plants.

Pebbles, known locally as 'popples' have been used for walls and floors and even gave their name to the village of Newton Popleford.

Find the information boards - Can you find out when people would have lived here and imagine what it would have looked like?

4. Turn right and follow the track to the corner of the plantation where the track splits in different directions. At this junction turn left and continue along the wide stony track. This is the boundary between Woodbury and Colaton Raleigh commons.

As you continue across the heath you will be surrounded by special heathland plants including two types of gorse and three different heathers. Bell heather, ling and cross-leaved heath, all have purple/pinkish flowers but different petal shapes and arrangements of leaves.

6. Continue down to Model Airfield car park and cross the road. Pass another barrow to your right and walk down to the gate, closing it behind you, and continue ahead across the boardwalk.

5. Halfway along the wide stony track turn right onto a grassy track (If you reach Uphams plantation you have gone too far!).

Can you find all three species of heather?

You are now on Bicton Common. Dartmoor hill ponies and cattle graze here in the summer.

7. At the crossroads, either turn right and return to the carpark or turn left for an additional 1km extension.

8. Continue down hill towards the stream at the bottom, before the stream follow the track around a right hand bend and follow it back up hill.

9. From the Gibraltar stone, retrace your steps to the track, turn left and follow the track down and then up toward the stand of trees.

Look out for the Gibraltar stone. The heath has a long history of providing a place for the military to train.

What is the date on the stone and why is it here?

Stop to admire the view at Lookout copse!

10. Continue to the corner of the plantation and turn right at the bench. At the end of the trees take the middle path back to Four Firs following the East Devon Way.

As you walk back to the car park listen for a stonechat's song which is reminiscent of two pebbles being knocked together, and the scratchy song of Dartford warblers.