

PEBBLEBED QUEST

SMUGGLERS
& GOAT SUCKERS



Start at Mutters Moors car park
Follows rough tracks, some gentle sloping sections.
4.5km (approx 90min)

Mutters Moor is part of the Pebblebed Heaths National Nature Reserve. The largest part of the reserve is on the other side of the Otter valley, Mutters Moor is an outlier located between Sidmouth and Otterton.

1. With your back to the road entrances find the narrow gap in far left corner of car park and follow grassed path northward for 700m.

Abraham Mutter, who gave his name to this place was a local log merchant and turf cutter. However, he was also rumoured to be a smuggler and part of Jack Rattenbury's gang. What better place to hide and transport contraband to neighbouring settlements but in a cart piled high with turfs or wood?

2. Continue on the main path.

3. When you reach the stony bridleway track turn left and follow it.

Near here is the site of the Seven Stones, a stone circle dating from the Bronze Age. In the 18th century the stones were removed to the formal gardens at Bicton Garden. Today these are open to the public as Bicton Park Botanical Gardens.

4. Ignore the footpaths to left and right to stay on bridleway.

To hear the churring nightjar you need to visit in the dark but in the day you may be lucky enough to hear the yellow hammer calling for 'a little bit of bread but no cheeeese!'

Heathland is home to some pretty remarkable plants and creatures. One of them is the 'Goatsucker' or Nightjar. A bird who arrives in early summer from Africa to find a mate and raise young.

Folklore talks of these birds, with tiny beaks but huge mouths, stealing milk from goats and attributed other night-time horrors to them. Other names include Night hawk, Night shriek and Churn owl. Their wide gape is actually perfect for catching flying insects such as moths and definitely not for milking goats or blinding livestock and people!

5. At this point the path turns a sharp corner and continues almost straight. Ignore the permissive path that descends from the left to Passaford Lane connecting Mutter's Moor with the Otter Valley.

Stop to admire the view across the valley!

The geology of Mutter's Moor differs to the main block of heathland on the other side of the Otter Valley. Rather than Triassic beds of pebbles and red sandstone, the geology here is younger, Cretaceous upper greensand capped by clay with flints and chert.

While Earth movement 20 million years ago, followed by erosion, brought the Triassic geology back to the surface in some places, here on Mutters Moor the Triassic Pebblebeds remain deeply buried beneath rocks of the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods.

6. This is near half-way point and here the path continues straight on under the trees. At the end of the footpath cross bridle path towards wood and find lookout with bench to your left.

7. Stop and rest a while as Keble once did or turn and retrace your steps past barrier and back along bridleway for 100m.

This is Keble's Seat a local landmark named for John Keble, an anglican priest, theologian and poet (1792 to 1866) who loved this spot.

8. At wooden finger post take left hand bridleway into the trees (signed Peak Hill 1.5 miles) this route can be muddy if wet. After 500m, at end of path, turn left to join wider track.

In the UK moors are generally upland areas with high rainfall while heaths are lowland areas of heather and gorse shaped by human activity. Mutter's Moor isn't a true moorland but heathland – 48 hectares of dry-lowland heath. Over 80% of heathland has been lost since Kebles time in the 1800.

9. Continue on this forest track till it opens out to heathland again on right. Then keeping woodland on left, follow stony track for 1km, all the way back to the car park.



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Bell heather



Yellow hammer



Nightjar



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