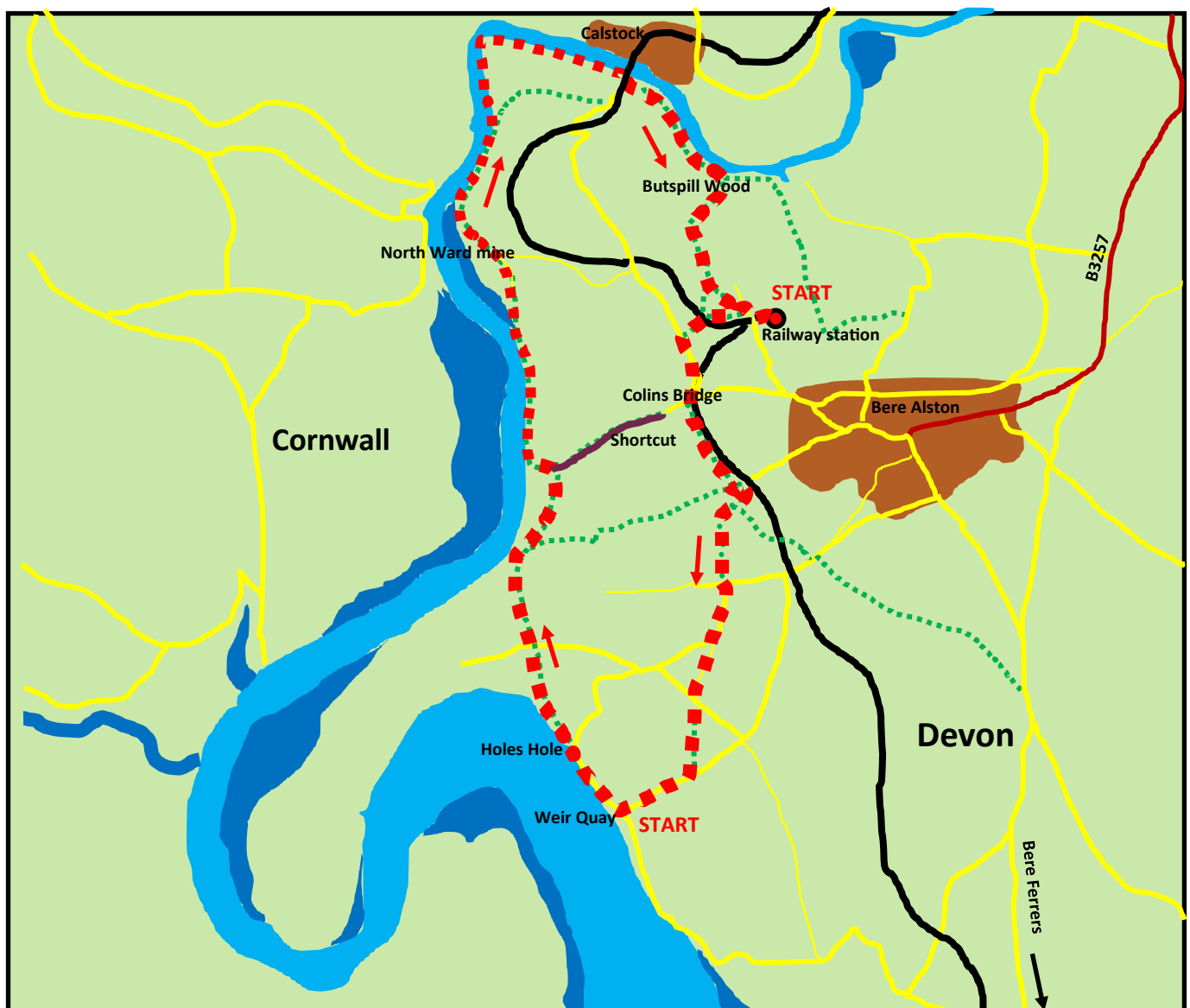


Walk 3 The Silver Mines

In his book "Industrial Archaeology of the Tamar Valley" Frank Booker opens the chapter on Silver Mines by saying "The silver and lead mines of the Tamar Valley have probably been more profitably worked over a longer period than any other mines in England." The silver/lead lode is made up of two parallel seams about three quarters of a mile apart. This walk is going to take you out and back on both seams. It's a walk of about 8 miles but there is a shortcut back to both start locations to make a 5 mile walk. On the walk you will pass through Lockeridge, Whitsam, Birch, Butspill, and North Ward mines and pass close to Furzhill and Cleave. You will also walk under the Calstock viaduct.

The choice of **START** locations is either **the Railway Station PL20 7ES SX440 673** particularly for bus and train travellers or **Weir Quay PL20 7BS SX433 649** for those who are driving. If you are using the bus you will find additional information in BUSTOP WALKS. The Walk Description will start at the Railway Station so If you want to start at **Weir Quay** scroll on down a few pages.

This is a particularly picturesque walk with lovely views of the Tamar valley but be aware there are some steep sections both up and down There are also some free to use picnic tables near North Ward Mine. The tables are about two and quarter hrs from the station or an hour and a quarter from Weir Quay.





Come out of the station approach road and turn right to set off down hill and under a pair of railway bridges one of which carries the railway line that goes to Gunnislake over the Calstock viaduct.



A little bit further on just past the house on the right there is a kissing gate on your left. Go through the gate and walk straight ahead across the field.



(If you started the LONG WALK at Weir Quay you will approach this gate from the right.)

On the other side of the field there is another gate and also another bridge to walk under. Stay on the path and when you reach the road turn left.



Walk on up the road to another railway bridge but this time we ignore it and instead fork right and then almost immediately fork left. (If you are on the SHORT WALK from Weir Quay just turn sharp right before you reach the road). Go through two gates and down the edge of a field staying parallel with the railway line and close to the hedge on your left.



When you reach the other side of the field go through another gate and along a narrow path. In 100m you will reach a road.



Turn left and walk up to but not under the bridge. Turn right and follow the path around Lockeridge Silver Mine. (The mine workings are in the wooded area that seems to be well used by children and dog walkers so I don't suppose anyone will mind if you explored it. There is a path all the way around the perimeter.)



At about the highest point take the short path on your left up to a gate that opens out into a field.



Go through the gate and turn right to walk along the top edge of the wood passing a chimney in the woods on your right. Head towards a mound with some fir trees growing on top. This is believed to be a medieval mine shaft and spoil heap.



Continuing on past the mound to go down hill next to a hedge on your right. Whitsam mine is on the other side of the metal gate which you quickly reach as you walk down the field



You will walk through the mine workings for 350m following a well used path down to and over a stream then up to a road passing mine shafts and spoil heaps on your way.



On reaching the road go straight ahead down the hill. This road will take you past Furzhill mine which is in private woodland on your right as you walk down the hill.



As the road bends right fork left along a track sign posted as a restrictive byway. You are now walking along the line of Furzhill /Birch silver mine that is split into two parts one on either side of the next road you meet



On reaching the road turn left. Soon you will see the white gable end of a cottage on your right. This is Birch cottage and is at the top end of the southern section of Furzhill/ Birch mine.



Turn right next to Birch Cottage to follow the bridleway through the mine workings. Look out for a chimney hidden in the woods



When you reach the road turn right and walk down hill and turn right again when you reach the T junction signposted to Holes Hole or walk back to your car if you started from here.



As you walk down the hill on your right you will pass a large stone building which was once an ore processing and metal smelting plant that operated in the mid to late 19th century. After it closed down the premises were turned into a jam factory presumably capitalising on all the soft fruit which was produced in the area.

Unfortunately that also failed and the building are now homes.

Starting at Weir Quay

From Bere Alston find your way down to Weir Quay and park near the T junction

(If you started at the station turn right and walk to Holes Hole)



With the river on your left set off to walk to Holes Hole.



Just past the wreck of the Merganser on the foreshore the road bends sharply right. Here fork left and passing between two tall hedges start the short but quite steep climb into Hanging Cliff Wood.

On your left as you walk up through the wood look down to the water and you will see the trees are growing on an almost vertical slope.



When the path reaches the top of the wood it levels out next to a fence. Here fork right. Go over a stile turn right again and walk along the edge of the field with the hedge on your right.



When you reach the road turn left then within 10m turn right to go through another gate and again keeping the hedge on your right walk on down the steep field.



Unseen below at river level on your left is North Hooe Silver and lead mine that was worked from the 13th Century. The miners had a fine view of the Tamar on their way to work.



It does get very steep after going through this gate. I found it safer to zig zag down the path/hill



Cross over the board walk



When you reach the field go straight across and through a gate to walk along an ancient sunken path that would surely have been used by the mine workers in medieval times.



When you reach the bottom of the hill turn left to go over another board walk which crosses the reed beds.



Having crossed the reed beds go up into the next field and turn right.



With the field boundary on your right go through 2 fields and in the very far corner of the second field you will arrive at this gate. For the long walk go through the gate and down to a bridge .

Short walk

If you are on the short walk starting at either the railway station or Weir Quay turn right and walk up the farm track passing Braunder farm and at the top of the hill you will arrive back at Colins Bridge where you can turn left for the Railway Station or right for Weir Quay. If you started at Weir Quay scroll back to page 2 for guidance.

LONG WALK

Continuing on the long walk having gone over the little bridge that crosses a stream in the wood go up the slope through the gate and turn left to walk on down a steep field. When you reach the bottom edge of the field turn right and walk along quite a well worn path as far as you can go keeping to the lower side of the field.



In the field corner go through the gate and into a wood.



On exiting the wood through a gate keep on along the base of the next field. After going through another gate you will reach a farm drive. Here turn right and walk out of the farm. *(I have Ignored the farmers suggested diversion; you can use it if you want to)*



When the farm road makes a very sharp right turn go left through a wooden gate. Walk quickly past the now private house which was part of North Hooe mine once a very productive silver/lead mine.



Walkers are free to use these picnic tables.

Go past the picnic tables and through the gate into another wood. Follow the track through the wood. As you reach river level Cotehele quay can be seen on the other side of the river.



On the other side of the wood go through the gate or over the stile into a field and stay on the lower side of the field to walk next to the river.



When you reach the other side of this field keep left to use the permissive path which takes you....



..... over a stile and along the top of the embankment.



Stay on the embankment passing under the Calstock viaduct built of in-situ cast concrete blocks and completed in 1908. Passing Ferry farm on your right and the new ferry on your left walk on to the end of the embankment.



When you reach the end of the embankment go up the zig zag steps and into the wood. Walk on up to the finger post and turn left. Stay on the path with the river on your left.



As the path starts to descend look to your left and you will see the remains of Butspill Quay believed to be medieval.



Soon you will drop down to meet a wider path with a stream in front of you. Don't cross the stream instead turn right and take the moderate incline away from the river passing through Butspill mine another of the medieval silver mines. Mine workings are still visible in the wood.



Bear left when two paths merge



**IF YOU STARTED AT WEIR QUAY GO THROUGH THE GATE AND KEEP TO THE RIGHT OF THE CENTRAL WOOD.
IF YOU STARTED AT THE STATION GO THROUGH THE GATE AND KEEP TO THE LEFT OF THE CENTRAL WOOD**



To get back up to the station walk on up the field and soon the very first kissing gate you went through will come into view. Go through it turn right.

If you started at Weir Quay scroll back up to the beginning and continue your walk.