



Walk 16. The Lyn hamlets, Barbrook and Cheriton.

- 7.5 miles, ascents and descents of 400 metres (6.1 miles and 340 metres for the shorter route). 3 hours 5 minutes continuous walking, allow 4 to 4½ hours.

Terrain: Paths, tracks, roads and a few fields. ! On the main route there is a ford with stepping-stones, some submerged and treacherously slippery. Boots with good grip are needed here, and the crossing shouldn't be attempted in winter or after heavy or prolonged rain: use the short-cut instead.

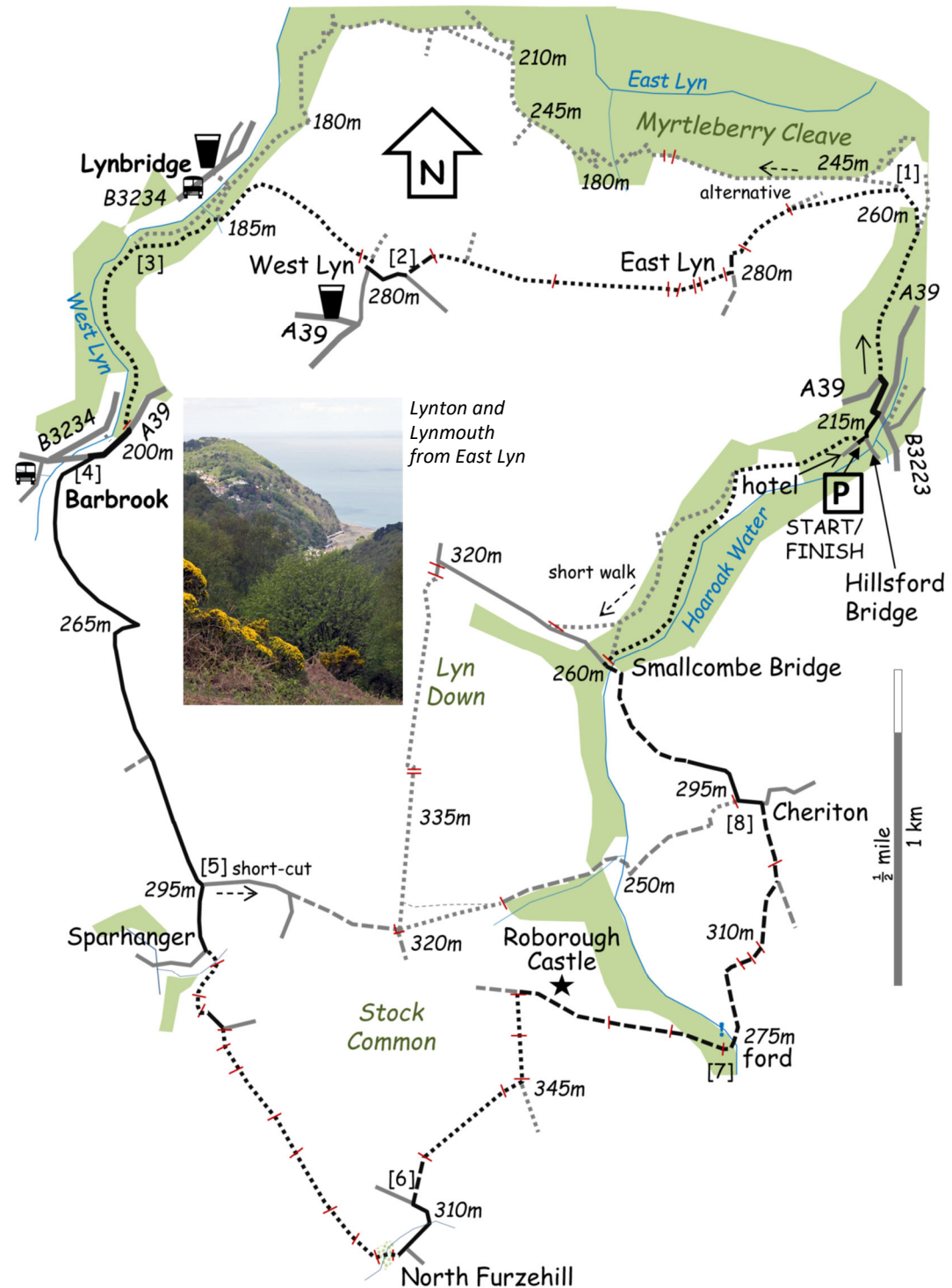
Access: Start at Hillsford Bridge (Combe Park) car park at the junction of the A39 and B3223 (NT: SS 740 477, nearest postcode EX35 6LF). By bus, start from Lynbridge or Barbrook using the 309/310 Lynmouth to Barnstaple service (frequent, Mondays to Saturdays).

Map: OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor. The top half of the route is also on Croydecycle 04/54 Lynton and Lynmouth.

Refreshments: Pubs just off the route at Lynbridge and West Lyn, wide choice in nearby Lynton and Lynmouth.

THE MAGNIFICENT EAST LYN GORGE is explored in walks 15 and 40. Walking half a mile behind the gorge, between East and West Lyn hamlets, gives even more far-reaching panoramas as you are higher up and have fewer trees to obscure the view. The route then descends and tracks through woods alongside the West Lyn to Barbrook, before climbing again to cross Stock Common and the Hoarok Water to arrive at Cheriton. The final stretch descends to Hoarok Water and follows it, with a short diversion, back to the start.

From the Hillsford Bridge car park, turn left on to the road then immediately take the left-hand, uphill branch of the A39 (signposted Lynton and Barnstaple). Where the road bends left, follow the bridleway ahead to East Lyn and Lynmouth. The path is steep at first; when it levels out at a grassy area, ignore a right turn to Watersmeet. In less than two minutes there are views over the East Lyn valley on the right, and Chisel Combe to the left. Keep left at a fork towards East Lyn (15mins, [1]). (For the alternative route along the gorge-top, described later, fork right). You will soon have views over Lynton and Lynmouth. After passing a path on the right back to Watersmeet, go through a gate, then a second gate to come to a farm (East Lyn); follow the track around the farm buildings then turn right through a gate with a faded blob of yellow paint. Go through two gates in quick succession, pass a pond, then through another gate next to a stone barn. After yet another gate you will have a brief view before continuing on an enclosed path. At its end go through a gate into a field; keep to its left-hand edge. At the far side go through a kissing gate to join a track. At a T-junction (West Lyn hamlet; 40mins, [2]) turn right downhill on a hard road.



The road soon bends left (to the A39 and pub), but your route continues straight ahead to a footpath sign between houses; take the left turn towards Lynton and Lynbridge. At the far end of the farm go through a pedestrian gate on an enclosed path. Follow this stony path downhill; it joins the side of a valley, then comes to a hairpin bend. Lynbridge (and another pub) is to the right, but to continue the walk head left on a small path past a tall metal gate, crossing a small stream. This woodland path gradually drops down to come alongside the West Lyn river, where a path comes in from the right (the alternative route rejoins here; 55mins, [3]). After another five minutes the first houses of Barbrook can be seen on the far side of the river. Shortly after, ascend steps to come to a road at a former chapel. Turn right, and in a minute or so take a side road heading steeply uphill on the left (1hr10mins, [4]); you may first want to head down steps on the right to the footbridge over the West Lyn. The road ascends steeply to a hairpin bend, then gradually levels out.

A mile after leaving Barbrook, turn right on a lane with a wooden sign for Sparhanger (1hr35mins, [5]). This route will take you across **treacherously slippery** stepping-stones; for the short-cut, advisable in winter and after heavy rain, keep left (see the directions opposite). As the lane bends right, turn left on a footpath at a farm entrance; the path continues to the right, heading down towards a shed then to its left. Cross a small stream and go through a gate, keeping right along a slight ridge. The path soon comes to another farm (South Stock); follow the permitted path anticlockwise around the farm, going through several gates to arrive at the farmyard. Leave on the farm drive; where it bears left, continue ahead through a gate into a field. Your route is now straight on, with views of Ilkerton Ridge ahead and to the right; you will go through or over a gate, a ladder stile, two stiles, a gate, another stile, then a gate on the left. This brings you to a garden area; go over a stream on a small clapper bridge, up to a metal kissing gate, and left over a cattle grid. At the chestnut tree roundabout, keep left towards Stock Common and Hoar Oak on a surfaced lane. Pass two houses then turn right on a public bridleway towards Hoar Oak (2hrs, [6]); this is a broad track between tree-topped banks. Go through a gate and continue along the left-hand side of the field. Into the next field, then turn left through a pedestrian gate signposted to Sparhanger and Cheriton. Through a triple gate, then come to a T-junction at a pedestrian gate; turn right on an enclosed path. Note the earthworks through the hedge on the left; this is Roborough Castle, a small Iron Age fortified settlement. After a gate, there are views to the left. After two more gates bear left to cross Hoar Oak Water on stepping-stones: even with the rope for assistance, these can be very slippery and need great care (2hr25mins, [7]).

Head through a gate and to the top of the hill, following the path around to the right. Go through three gates in succession to come on to open moorland, the north end of Cheriton Ridge. In the distance are Butter Hill, Kipscombe Hill and the A39. Follow the vehicle track, bearing left at a signpost towards Cheriton, go through a gate, and walk down to a surfaced road. Turn left here. Ignore the path on the left (2hr40mins, [8]), and follow the road past a farm; the lane becomes unsurfaced, and drops down to a house beside Hoar Oak Water. Cross the bridge and turn right to walk beside the stream. Follow the path along the bank until you are diverted to the left around a hotel. Keep right until you meet a minor path to the left with a yellow M over W sign: this takes you to the road opposite the car park.

Short-cut to Cheriton: this avoids the stepping-stones/ford across Hoar Oak Water and shortens the walk by 1.4 miles. At the 1hr35min point ([5]) keep left on the road. As it bends right, continue ahead on a bridleway, a stony vehicle track. In about five minutes the track ends at a gate. Continue through it and across the field with the boundary on your right ('bridleway to Cheriton'). Go through a gate to join a green lane, which takes you downhill to splash through a stream and cross a bridge over Hoar Oak Water. Follow the lane uphill, eventually arriving at a road (the 2hr40min point, [8]). Turn left here to rejoin the main walk.

Alternative start: the Lyn gorges (● 7.8 miles, 500m of ascent and descent). At the 15-minute point ([1]) take the right fork signposted to Lynmouth, then ignore a path on the right to Watersmeet. Continue roughly along the contour at the top of the gorge. You will soon have views down to Lynmouth. Go through two gates in succession; soon afterwards the path zig-zags down a steep side valley, crosses a cascading stream, and climbs up the other side. At the first signposted junction keep ahead towards Lynmouth; soon after you have views back up the gorge, with the A39 just visible in the bottom. Ignore a path turning off right to Lynmouth shortly afterwards. Views soon open up to Lynton, then the path continues around to the left along the edge of the smaller West Lyn gorge. Descend to a T-junction; keep left, and left again. Pass a cascade, keep right, and arrive at a stone bridge. The Cottage Inn is over the bridge, otherwise continue ahead on the left-hand side of the river to rejoin the main route at the 55-minute point ([3]).

Short walk: Hillsford Bridge and Lyn Down (● 3.7 miles, 200m of ascent and descent). Take the path opposite the car park, climbing to the left. At the fork keep right on the Macmillan Way, then turn left in front of the gate to walk at the back of the hotel. Where the path splits, keep right on the woodland path. This roughly follows the contour. Keep right at a fork, then go through a gate on to a narrow lane; turn right here to go uphill. Where the lane bends sharply right, turn left on a wide track and go through two gates. Go straight ahead in the field, aiming for the far left-hand corner. Go through a gap to continue ahead. At the end of this field, go through the leftmost (pedestrian) gate and continue with the field boundary on your right. Almost at the end of the field beyond, turn left to keep a line of gorse bushes on your left. Go through a gate to join a green lane, which takes you downhill to a shallow but muddy ford and a bridge across Hoar Oak Water. Continue on the lane, eventually arriving at a road (the 2hr40min point, [8]). Turn left to join the main walk here and return to the start.

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