



## Walk 20. County Gate to Countisbury via the East Lyn River.

- 5.4 miles, ascents of 340 metres and descents of 400 metres. 2 hours 20 minutes constant walking, allow up to 3½ hours.

Terrain: Mostly on paths, often narrow and uneven. ! There are several narrow sections above steep hillsides or rocky river banks.

Access: By car, park in the County Gate car park (SS 793 486, near to EX35 6NQ). Use the bus to return, or combine this route with walk 19 to make a 10-mile circuit. The Exmoor Coaster bus between Minehead or Watchet and Lynmouth stops at County Gate and Countisbury.

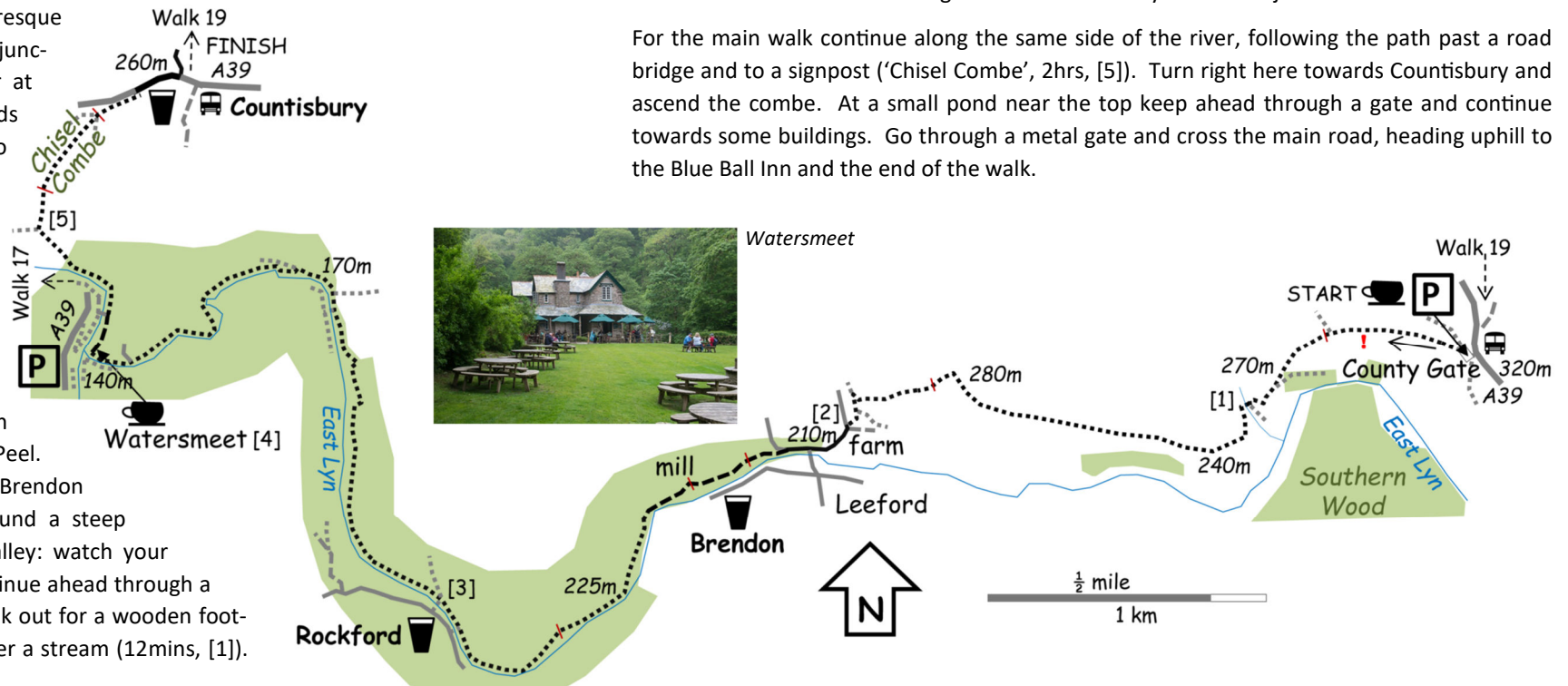
Map: Croydecycle 04 Lynton, Lynmouth & Doone Valley or OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

Refreshments: Seasonal café at Watersmeet, tea room at County Gate, pubs at Brendon, Rockford and Countisbury.

THIS IS A SUPERB RIVERSIDE WALK that starts high above the East Lyn river to contour around the hillside before descending into the valley. It passes the small villages of Brendon and Rockford, then follows the picturesque river into a wooded gorge and to its junction with cascading Hoar oak Water at Watersmeet. The final section heads back uphill through Chisel Combe to Countisbury, where it can be combined with walk 19 to return to the start, or the river can be followed to its source at Lynmouth.

Start from the County Gate car park. Looking across the valley, head for the right-hand corner where there is a topograph in memory of country writer John Peel.

Take a narrow footpath signposted 'Brendon 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>'. This follows the contour around a steep hillside, high above the East Lyn valley: watch your footing here. Ignore a left turn, continue ahead through a gate, then after a sharp left bend look out for a wooden footbridge to the right that takes you over a stream (12mins, [1]).



Go through a pedestrian gate and follow the path above the wide river valley. Ignore a crossing path and continue as indicated by the yellow-topped posts. The settlements of Leeford and Brendon come into view. Eventually the path heads downhill to a field; turn sharply left at a hairpin bend (a minor path continues ahead), then at a spreading oak tree bear right towards a group of houses. Descend some steps, arrive at a road and turn left; you may spot a rhea at the farm (40mins, [2]). Come to a stone bridge on the left. You are now at Brendon. If you want to visit the Staghunters Inn it is over the bridge and along the road to the right.

Ignoring the bridge, continue ahead for a minute or so along the road towards Porlock, Lynmouth and Lynton. After passing a small stone footbridge take a lane to the left signposted to Rockford and Watersmeet. Go through a gate marked 'Countisbury Mill', then through another gate past a house. The path takes you down to the East Lyn, past a National Trust sign and through a gate. Follow the path towards Watersmeet; a convenient footbridge allows a diversion to Rockford and its inn on the other side of the river if you are in need of sustenance (1hr10mins, [3]). The valley now begins to take on the character of a gorge. As it approaches Watersmeet the path becomes narrow and uneven. Watersmeet House (1hr50mins, [4], at the confluence of the East Lyn and Hoar oak Water) is a former fishing lodge, now a National Trust tea garden and shop: even if closed it is a good spot for a picnic.

The East Lyn continues to Lynmouth; for the alternative finish it can be followed on either side of the river. Cross the bridges at Watersmeet if you want to join walk 17.

For the main walk continue along the same side of the river, following the path past a road bridge and to a signpost ('Chisel Combe', 2hrs, [5]). Turn right here towards Countisbury and ascend the combe. At a small pond near the top keep ahead through a gate and continue towards some buildings. Go through a metal gate and cross the main road, heading uphill to the Blue Ball Inn and the end of the walk.

**Alternative finish at Lynmouth.** Join **walk 17** at Watersmeet and follow the instructions back to Lynmouth (● 6.5 miles, ascents of 300 metres and descents of 600 metres).

**Circular walks.** This route is designed to link up with **walk 19**, which returns to County Gate via the Coast Path (total ● 10 miles, ascents and descents of 870 metres). The walk can also be extended to include Lynmouth, using the instructions in **walk 17** as well as this walk and **walk 19** (full walk ● 13 miles with ascents and descents of 1150 metres).