



Walk 28. Minehead, Bratton Ball and Woodcombe.

- 6.2 miles, ascents and descents of 430 metres. 2 hours 40 minutes continuous walking, allow 3-4 hours.

Terrain: Paths, tracks and roads. Some slippery paths particularly in winter and after rain.

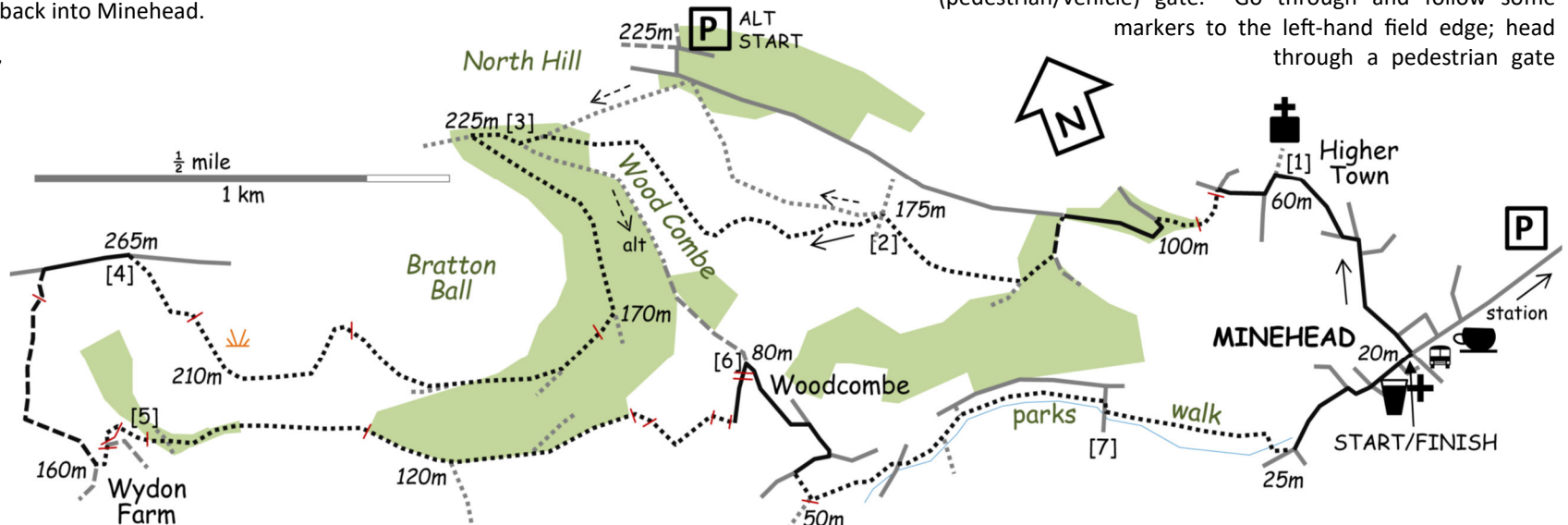
Access: The walk starts at Minehead's small town square, on the corner of Park Street and Friday Street (SS 968 462, TA24 5NH). Park anywhere suitable in Minehead, or arrive on the train or bus (the start is nearly half a mile inland along The Avenue from the station). Alternatively, start the walk above Wood Combe: follow Hill Road (the Selworthy Beacon road) out of Minehead, around a sharp bend, past the caravan site, then turn right on a concrete drive into a large car park made from the old WWII tank marshalling area (SS 954 475).

Map: Croydecycle O1 Minehead Dunster Selworthy or OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

Refreshments: In Minehead.

ALTHOUGH MUCH OF NORTH HILL IS OPEN MOORLAND, it feels tamer and more welcoming than the high moors of central Exmoor. It is also fairly free-draining, making for all-year walking. This walk to the west of Minehead heads up to the quiet part of town around the church, then explores the southern edge of North Hill, with views across the valley to the Grabbist Hill and Wootton Common ridge. It includes two contour paths, above Wood Combe and around the edge of Bratton Ball, which make for easy strolling and good views after the steady and sometimes steep climbs up to North Hill and to the head of Wood Combe. The return route tracks below Bratton Ball into the attractive hamlet of Woodcombe, then follows a 'locals' path' alongside a stream through parks back into Minehead.

Start at Minehead's small town square, on the corner of Park Street and Friday Street (next to the Duke of Wellington inn). Cross diagonally over the main road and walk up Holloway Street. As its name suggests this is an old holloway, a route that has been worn below the level of the surrounding landscape. Follow the road uphill and pass the front of a former school. Turn right into Church Street, with the church directly ahead. Follow it around to the left at a thatched house into Vicarage Road (10mins, [1]); Church Steps are to your right. Take the first road on the right, Moor Road. Opposite Pemswell



Road turn left on a signposted footpath through a gate next to a white house. After a second gate this narrows and takes you uphill, through a kissing gate, and to a road. Turn left and follow the road around the bend. Cross a cattle grid and take the first track on your left. Turn right at a T-junction then right again at a fork. Views open up to the left over inland Minehead. The path climbs steadily upwards until it comes to a wide grassy junction (35mins, [2]). Take the second path counting clockwise: this is the left-hand fork of Jim's Path, a short circular walk named after Jim Collins, Exmoor National Park's first ranger. For a few yards you will be beside a chain-link fence. Continue ahead when a path heads downhill to the left. This is the first of the two contour paths: you will soon have broad views across Minehead and the Grabbist ridge on the left, and the hamlet of Woodcombe nestles at the bottom of the combe below. Soon after the path comes among young trees, turn left at a junction to leave Jim's Path in the direction of Woodcombe.

At the T-junction soon after (55mins, [3]) turn right towards North Hill (the shorter alternative walk turns left here). Start heading upwards, then take a left turn towards Bratton on a broad, straight path descending gently under trees. The path gradually bends right and gains height. Take a right fork, initially steeply upwards, signposted Bratton and Wydon Farm. Cross a stile and turn left. Soon fork right towards North Hill. Emerge from the trees at the end of a stone wall; ignore a minor track heading down to the left. The path starts following the contour around the hillside. Go through a wooden gate (or between gateposts), track around the side of the hill, then head uphill between marker posts and through a pedestrian gate. The path continues initially to the left, gradually bearing right and heading up to a road (1hr35mins, [4]). Most of the climbing is now over. Turn left on the road across a cattle grid, then two minutes further on turn left on a farm track. Go through a gate and follow the track until you see the farm buildings below to the left. As the track bends right, walk to the fenceline in front of you and follow it left downhill. Go through a field gate and immediately left through another, then turn right alongside the fence until you come to a double (pedestrian/vehicle) gate. Go through and follow some markers to the left-hand field edge; head through a pedestrian gate

(1hr45mins, [5]), then straight on towards Bratton Wood where a path crosses. You will be walking alongside a wire fence with occasional yellow-topped posts. Soon your outward route can be glimpsed above. Go through a gate and continue on a woodland path. Keep to the wood edge, ignoring paths first to the right (Bratton) then to the left (North Hill).

At the end of the wood go through two metal pedestrian gates, continuing across a field. Minehead spreads out in front of you. Follow the signposted path left along the field edge, then right over a stile, through a small yard, and along a farm track. After going through a vehicle gate turn right on a road (2hr10mins, [6]). The short-cut comes in here. Walk alongside a rill into Woodcombe; this was once a hamlet hidden, as its name implies, in a wooded combe, but it is now attached to Minehead. Stroll between the houses, bear left, turn right at a T-junction, then turn right again into Bratton Lane. When the houses run out turn left on a surfaced footpath. Keep left at the next junction to stroll through a small park with a pond. Follow a stream to a road; cross over into Woodside Close, then turn immediately left to keep beside the stream. Follow the stream to another road; turn right then left to join the signposted Parks Walk. This takes you into another small park bordered by the back gardens of houses. At its end turn right, cross a bridge, then turn left on a road (2hr35mins, [7]). Turn right at a T-junction to walk back into the centre of Minehead.

Alternative start from North Hill: Start from the tank marshalling area car park. Return to the road, cross it diagonally to a small parking area and take the path on the right, a grassy track. Descend until you meet a path coming in from the left. Continue ahead to a T-junction, turning right to join the walk at the 55-minute point ([3]). Follow the instructions to the end of the walk and back out of Minehead to the 35-minute point ([2]), then take the third rather than the second path (the northern branch of Jim's Path). This will take you back to the small parking area.

Shorter walk: Minehead and Woodcombe (● 3.6 miles, ascents and descents of 240 metres). Follow the main walk to the 55 minute point ([3]), but turn left rather than right at the T-junction. This stony track will take you directly down Wood Combe, rejoining the main walk in Woodcombe at the 2hr10min point ([6]).



Bratton Ball

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