



Walk 30. Malmsmead, Great Tom's Hill and Oare.

- 7.8 miles, ascents and descents of 325 metres (8.4 miles and 410 metres starting from County Gate). 3 hours 5 minutes constant walking, allow 4 hours.

Terrain: Mostly on paths and tracks, possibly muddy. Open moorland, but with reasonably well-defined paths. Two or three streams to splash through.

Access: Start from Lorna Doone Farm in Malmsmead, down narrow lanes (SS 792 478, near EX35 6NU, £/NT members free). The Exmoor Coaster bus stops at the County Gate car park, just under a mile from the start and 80m higher up (SS 793 486, near to EX35 6NQ).

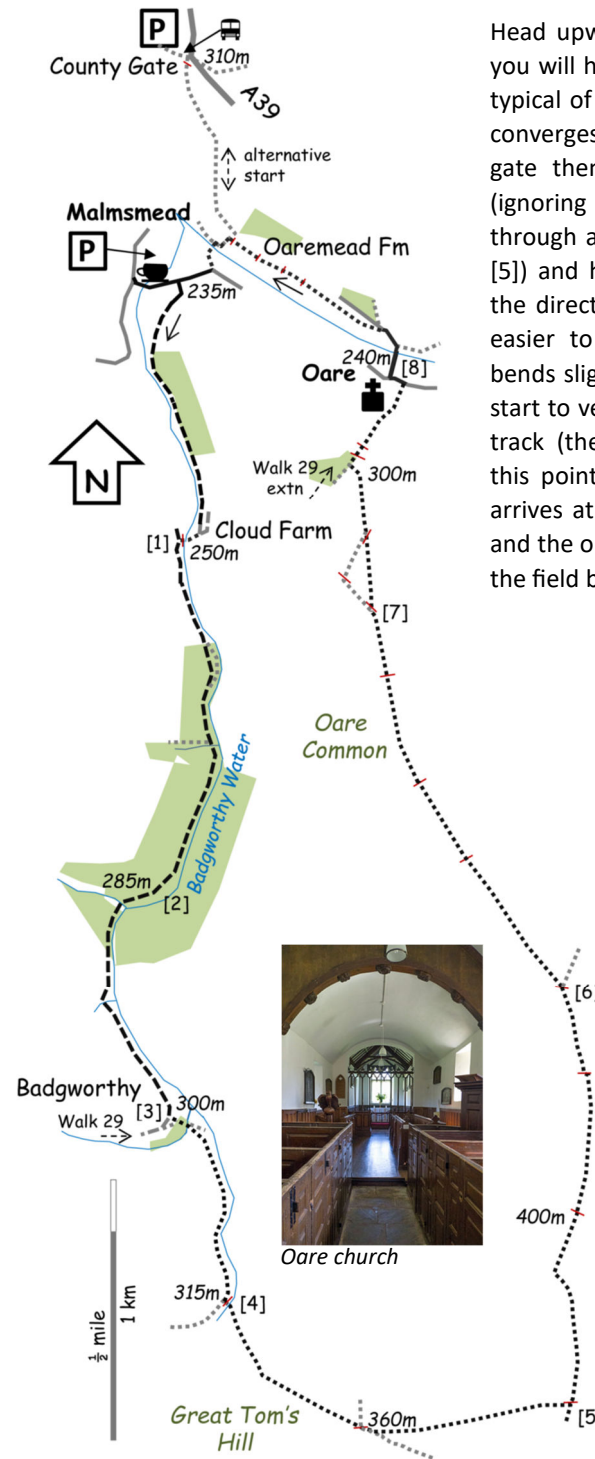
Map: Croydecycle 04 Lynton Lynmouth & Doone Valley or OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

Refreshments: In Malmsmead.

THIS COMPANION ROUTE TO WALK 29 explores the country to the east of Badgworthy Water, including Great Tom's Hill and the village of Oare itself. Like walk 29 it is a fairly gentle introduction to upland Exmoor centred on a small hamlet with a National Trust tearoom. Oare's main claim to fame is its 15th-century church. The grandfather of *Lorna Doone* author R. D. Blackmore was once vicar here, and Blackmore set Lorna's dramatic wedding in the church; it is worth a look inside even if you are not a fan of the novel.

If you are starting from County Gate, from the bus shelter face away from the road, go through a gate and follow a signposted bridleway alongside the fence to the left. Malmsmead is immediately below you. The path soon starts descending. At a bridleway sign, turn right then go over a bridge. When you meet a road, turn right: this will soon bring you to the entrance to Cloud Farm. Turn right here.

Otherwise the walk from the car park next to Lorna Doone Farm. Walk past the Lorna Doone Farm buildings and bear left to go over the stone bridge. Follow the road for two minutes then turn right into the entrance to Cloud Farm. In fifteen minutes or so arrive at the farm, a white-painted house with a seasonal tea room. Turn right to pass the camp site, and cross Badgworthy Water on a footbridge (25mins, [1]). Turn left and upwards on a track parallel with the river: you are now reversing the return part of the main walk. After a gate, the path enters light woods. When the path splits, keep left parallel with the river but not so close as to have to fight your way through bracken. Cross the Lank Combe stream on a footbridge (50mins, [2]). A little further on splash through a small stream (possibly slippery), and continue on a high path above the river. In slightly over ten minutes come to a signpost above some mounds, remains of medieval Badgworthy village (1hr5mins, [3]); turn left here to descend to a side stream, crossing it on a plank bridge. Keep left to walk on a narrow path parallel with the river, and in another ten minutes or so go through a gate on the left and over a footbridge (1hr20mins, [4]).



Head upwards on the path opposite, from where you will have views across rounded moorland hills typical of this part of Exmoor. The path gradually converges with a dry stone wall. Go through the gate then turn left to walk alongside the wall (ignoring the path to Exford). At a wire fence, go through a gate in the wall on the left (1hr50mins, [5]) and head on to the moorland ('Oareford 2'); the direct compass bearing is due north, but it is easier to follow a fairly well-defined path that bends slightly left, then after six or seven minutes start to veer back to the right, picking up a narrow track (the Ordnance Survey map is confusing at this point). In another three minutes or so this arrives at a gate in a bank. Go through this gate and the one diagonally left to continue ahead, with the field boundary to your right.

When the boundary turns right, head diagonally left to go through a gate (2hr10mins, [6]). Aim for the right-hand end of a line of trees, where there is a signpost; bear right, alongside the banked field edge. A gate takes you back on to moorland with the bank on your right. The next gate brings you into pasture, then after a further gate come to the field corner and head left. The official path goes through a gate on the right (2hr30mins, [7]), and diagonally left across to another gate: you may be diverted to the next gate to turn right and arrive at the same point. Either way, cross the next field diagonally as signposted towards the right-hand end of a line of trees. Cross a vehicle track and descend to a gate in the corner of the field. A wide grass path leads onward from here, becoming a gravelly track before joining a road. Turn left to come to Oare church (2hr45mins, [8]). take a moment to

explore the interior, where there is a plaque commemorating R. D. Blackmore. Opposite the church head down to the road bridge and cross the river. Turn left on a signposted bridleway and follow it towards a smart farmhouse, going through gates to keep to the right of the house. At a T-junction turn left down a muddy path (right to return to County Gate), cross a footbridge, continue along the lane and then turn right on the road to return to Lorna Doone Farm and, beyond it to the right, the car park.

Malmsmead, Badgworthy, Great Tom's Hill and Oare (walks 29 and 30: ● 9.1 miles, ascents and descents of 430 metres). Follow walk 29 to Badgworthy (its 1hr45min point, [6], also the 1hr5min point [3] of this walk). Turn right to descend to a side stream, crossing it on a plank bridge. Now follow this walk back to the finish.