



Walk 4. Morteheo to Ilfracombe.

- 7.7 miles, ascents and descents of 550 metres and descents of 650 metres. 3 hours 30 minutes constant walking, allow 4½-5½ hours overall.

Terrain: A mix of tracks and paths, some uneven and potentially slippery. Morte Point is uneven jagged rock.

Access: Start the walk from the post office in Morteheo (SS 458 452, EX34 7DR). Park in Ilfracombe and take the bus to Morteheo (bus 31 runs roughly hourly every day between Ilfracombe, Morteheo and Woolacombe). Between March and the end of October parking in the town centre is expensive, so you may prefer to start from the Hillsborough (swimming pool) car park off the A399 on the other side of the harbour (SS 530 478, EX34 9QJ, £; adds 1 mile and 50m of ascent in total). Ilfracombe can also be reached by bus from Barnstaple (21, daily and 301, Monday to Saturday) and Combe Martin (301).

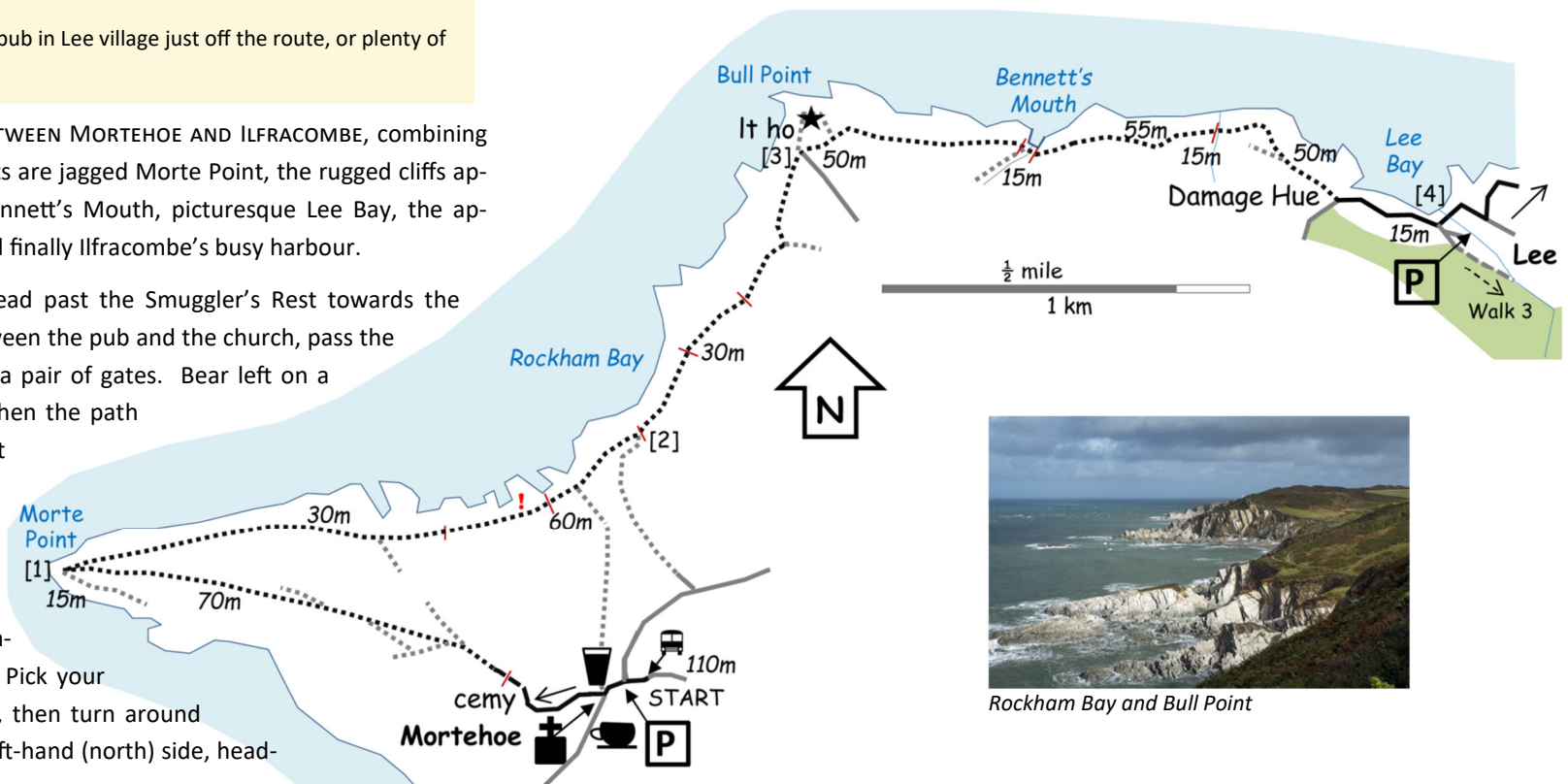
Maps: Croydecycle 07 Morteheo & Woolacombe plus 06 Ilfracombe and Berrynarbor, or OS Explorer 139 Barnstaple and Ilfracombe.

Refreshments: Pub and tea room in Morteheo, pub in Lee village just off the route, or plenty of choice in Ilfracombe.

THIS WALK EXPLORES THE SPECTACULAR COAST BETWEEN MORTEHOE AND ILFRACOMBE, combining the coastal sections of walks 3 and 5. Highlights are jagged Morte Point, the rugged cliffs approaching Bull Point, the miniature bay at Bennett's Mouth, picturesque Lee Bay, the approach into Ilfracombe over the Seven Hills, and finally Ilfracombe's busy harbour.

Starting from the post office in Morteheo, head past the Smuggler's Rest towards the church. Take the narrow road to the right between the pub and the church, pass the cemetery and continue on a rough track past a pair of gates. Bear left on a grassy path to head towards Morte Point. When the path forks, take the middle way and aim for a slight col between a pointed hill and a ridge; on a clear day the distant island of Lundy will be ahead of you. From the col follow a narrow path outwards along a ridge; as you come closer to the point you will walk through a jumble of jagged slate, like a stegosaurus's back. Pick your way carefully down to the point (25mins, [1]), then turn around and take the coast path on what is now your left-hand (north) side, head-

ing for the lighthouse at Bull Point. You may see seals among the rocks here. Continuing along the coast path ignore the turn to Morteheo, but follow a short diversion soon after where the original path is dangerously close to crumbling cliffs. Go through a gate, climb upwards, and pass a short section next to a sheer drop before heading down again. Through another gate, then a second path from Morteheo comes in from the right; keep left here. The path goes up and down before going through a third gate, just after another Morteheo path (1hr, [2]). Bear left. After the next gate the path diverts briefly inland; the 2014 storms washed away the way down to the beach, leaving wooden steps hanging precariously over the cliff. Follow the coast path first inland then to the left, bringing you uphill to Bull Point lighthouse (1hr15mins, [3]). You can walk all the way around the lighthouse enclosure, but the way on is the main path to the right. After a short almost level section drop down to a small rocky bay or inlet (Bennett's Mouth), zigzag up the other side, then descend to another small inlet with a bridge (Hilly Mouth). Climb uphill again and ascend steps (ignore the path to Sandy Cove on the left). The onward path is signposted to Lee. Meet a road and turn left to stroll down into Lee Bay (1hr45mins, [4]). This picturesque and relatively undeveloped little bay is worth exploring, particularly when the tide is out.



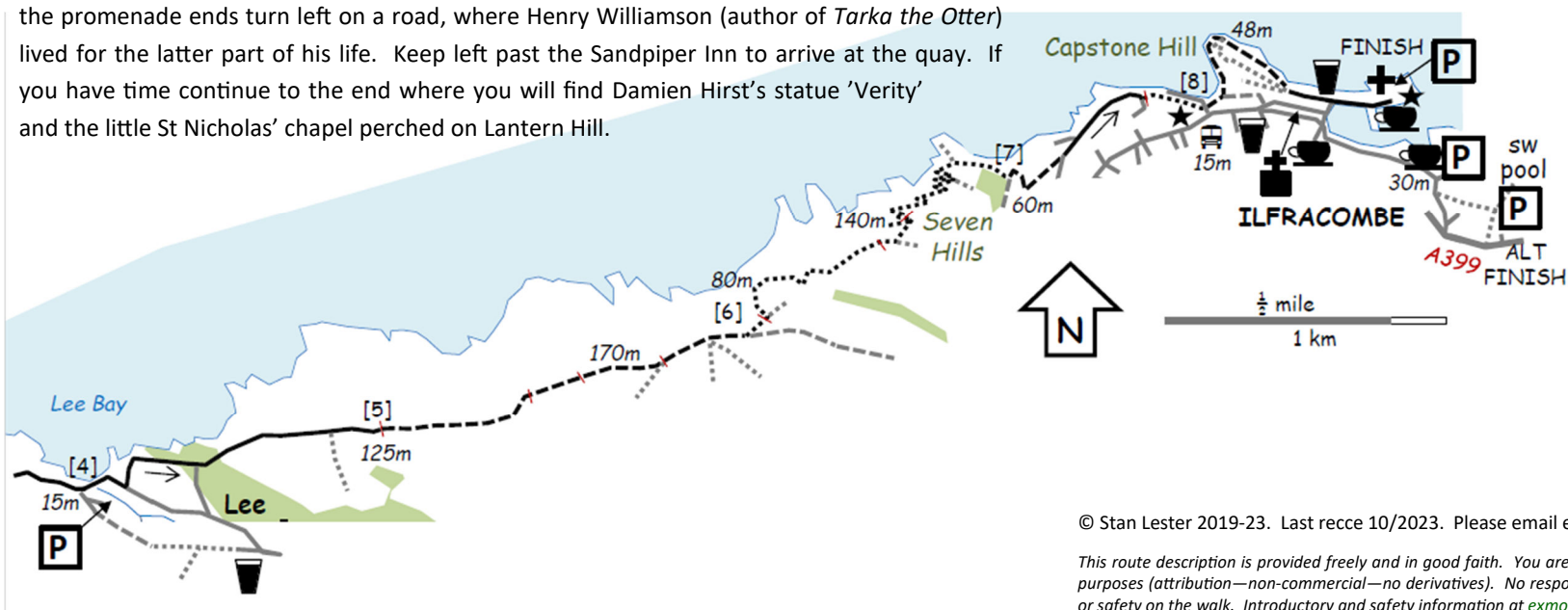
Rockham Bay and Bull Point

At the far side of the bay start heading uphill, soon turning left on a narrow lane signposted 'coast path'. This heads steeply uphill, gradually easing off. At a pair of isolated houses ('Blue Mushroom') go through the gate ahead to continue on the coast path, now a rough track (2hr10mins, [5]). This is the old coast road to Ilfracombe. Follow it through two gates, past a conspicuous old 'Public Footpath' sign, then through another gate and downhill through a cutting on slippery bedrock. Soon afterwards take a left turn on the signposted coast path, crossing a field to go through a wooden gate and turn sharply left (2hr35mins, [6]). Follow the path above a cliff; when it turns inland and gives way to grass continue ahead to an (initially hidden) National Trust marker post, then through a gap in a wall. Go through a kissing gate and continue uphill to a seat; to the left is a mini-turret with a toposcope indicating what you can see on the far side of the Bristol Channel.

At the seat turn right and start heading down the far side of the hill, then turn left through a gate. The path appears to double back on itself, but it soon zigzags down the hill. Ignore a right turn to the National Trust car park; continue zigzagging, then level out to approach Ilfracombe. Soon after some steps come to a path junction and turn left on the coast path towards the town centre. Now turn right on an unmade residential road, which soon swings around to the left (3hrs, [7]). Keep left at a hard road. This takes you above the coast; look out for the Tunnels Beach below on the left. When the road bends sharply right, go through a metal pedestrian gate on the left. Keep left through a little garden, then head down steps to the 'cooling towers' arts centre. Walk down to the main road, turn left, and then left again on a promenade beneath cliffs (3hr15mins, [8]). This will take you around Capstone Hill. When the promenade ends turn left on a road, where Henry Williamson (author of *Tarka the Otter*) lived for the latter part of his life. Keep left past the Sandpiper Inn to arrive at the quay. If you have time continue to the end where you will find Damien Hirst's statue 'Verity' and the little St Nicholas' chapel perched on Lantern Hill.

If you have left a car at Hillsborough, walk back around (or across) the harbour to the lifeboat station and fish quay, now following the road along the harbour's southern edge past the parking areas. Come to the 'blue mushroom'; keep right, then turn left on a path that descends steps, crosses an access road and soon brings you to the swimming pool. The car park is on your right.

Walk 3 continues inland from Lee Bay to return to Morteheo, while **walk 5** is a circular route from Ilfracombe inland to the Slade Reservoirs, returning to the coast at Lee.



Ilfracombe harbour

© Stan Lester 2019-23. Last recce 10/2023. Please email editor@exmoorwalker.uk with any updates or comments.

This route description is provided freely and in good faith. You are welcome to use, copy and distribute it for personal and non-profit purposes (attribution—non-commercial—no derivatives). No responsibility is taken for any errors or omissions, or for your navigation or safety on the walk. Introductory and safety information at exmoorwalker.uk.