



Walk 44. Exford and Withypool.

- 8 miles with ascents and descents of 400 metres. 3 hours 15 minutes constant walking, allow 4-4½ hours.

Terrain: Paths, fields and roads. Some sections are likely to be muddy other than after prolonged dry spells, and there is a stream to ford.

Access: By car, park in the car park in Exford (SS 854 383, near TA24 7PP). The walk can also be started from Withypool, from the 1hr55min-point: there is a small car park over the bridge from the village centre (SS 844 354, TA24 7RA). Bus 198 from Minehead to Dulverton stops at Exford, normally twice daily in each direction Monday-Saturday: check the timetables and note that not all buses go to Exford. There are no buses to Withypool.

Map: Croydecycle 53 Exford or OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

Refreshments: In Exford and Withypool.

EXFORD AND WITHYPOOL ARE TWO QUINTESSENTIAL EXMOOR VILLAGES of quite different character. Exford, on the River Exe, sits partly around a large green, and it is perhaps bound up with hunting, riding and shooting more than any other village on Exmoor, as will be apparent from a visit to either of its grand and characterful inns. Withypool, on the Barle, has a quieter and more remote feel with the homely Royal Oak and the multi-purpose village shop and post office. Nevertheless it is busy in the summer and parking can be difficult. This varied walk connects the two villages via fields and lanes on the outward stretch and a brief excursion on to open moorland on the return.

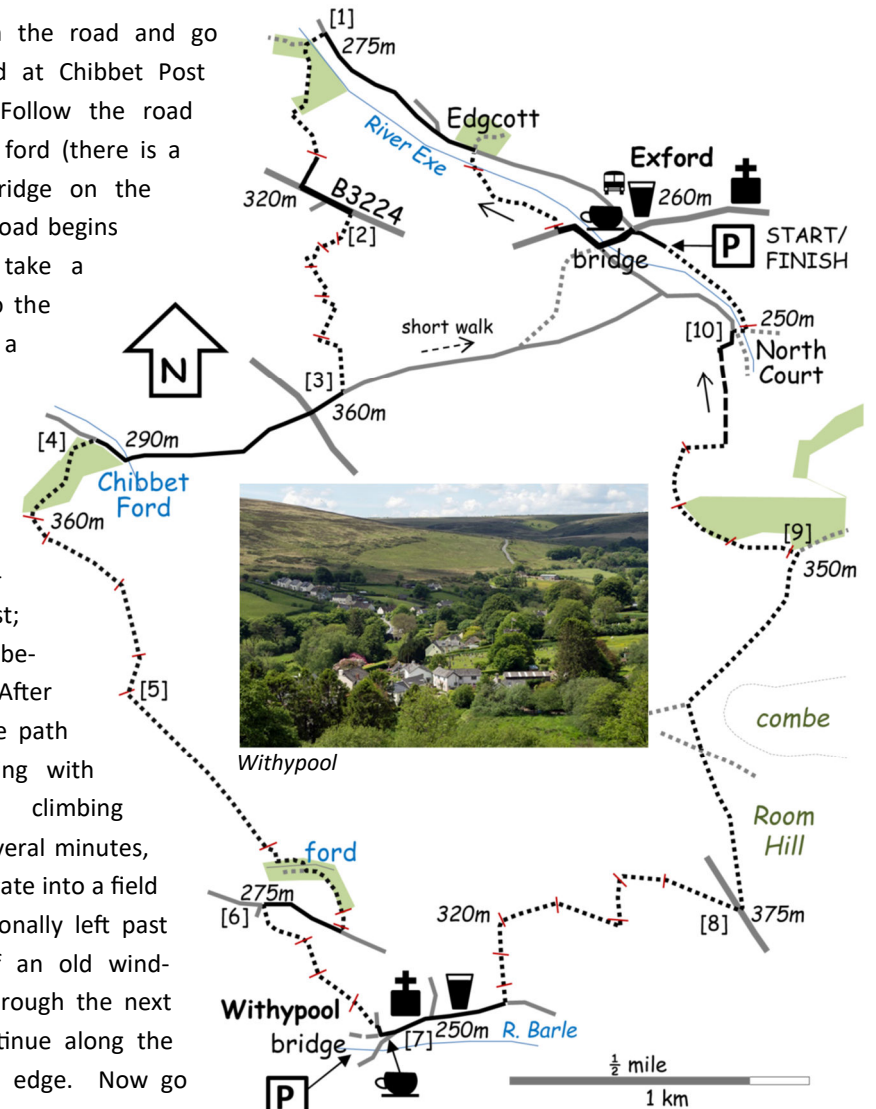
Start from the car park in Exford. Walk back to the road, then turn left and go through the village. Follow the main road over the river and around to the right. When the road bends left go up some steps on the right to join a signposted footpath. Follow the path through a double kissing gate and along an enclosed section, then go back over the Exe on a wooden bridge and emerge into a field. Bear left to head for two telegraph poles, crossing a small plank bridge in between them and continuing through a gate on to a road. Turn left here, then take the left fork as the main road heads right and uphill. In less than ten minutes come to a string of houses on the left; immediately before the last one, Lower Mill (20mins, [1]), turn left down a lane and cross the River Exe yet again (it is already smaller than at Exford, having lost two small tributaries). Turn left if you have used the bridge, straight on if you have paddled across the ford: either way, keep left on the bridleway towards South Ley, gaining height above the river. When the bridleway comes into a field, head diagonally right to a white house. Join a lane here and follow it to the main road (the B3224). Turn left, pass two

driveways on the right, then look for an almost hidden stile in the hedge on the right, signposted to Chibbet Post (35mins, [2]).

Enter the field and keep right. Turn right through the second of a pair of gates, then head down diagonally across the field to a stile that takes you well to the right of a farmhouse. Cross a small stream, head uphill, go to the right through a gate, and turn left. Keep to the left-hand field boundary and head steeply upwards to a field gate in the far end. Continue uphill, go over a ladder stile, turn left and then right along the field boundary, and finally go over a stile to meet a road (55mins, [3]). The short walk turns off left here.

Turn right on the road and go straight ahead at Chibbet Post crossroads. Follow the road downhill to a ford (there is a narrow footbridge on the left). As the road begins rising again, take a grassy path to the left through a gate and into a wood (1hr 5mins, [4]).

Keep ahead and upwards to a yellow-topped post; turn left just beyond it. After heavy rain the path will be running with water. After climbing steeply for several minutes, go through a gate into a field and turn diagonally left past the gantry of an old wind-pump. Go through the next gate and continue along the left-hand field edge. Now go through a wide gate and cross



the next field diagonally to a gate at the far corner. Head through it and cross diagonally right (1hr 25mins, [5]). Enter the next field where there is a small confirming signpost pointing the way forward.

Follow the path through several more fields always keeping the field boundary on your right. Eventually come to a pedestrian gate in front of you, then head downwards towards a telegraph pole. Just beyond is a finger post: turn right here, descend on a steep path and then steps, and cross a stream. Now turn left along a broad woodland track. Go through a gate then over a stile to come to a narrow road. Turn right. In five minutes there is a tarmac drive on the left (1hr45mins, [6]); immediately before it go through a gate signposted 'Withypool'. Cross the field ahead, then follow the path through two more fields. The path runs alongside a fence then joins a surfaced lane. Turn left at the T-junction just beyond and walk down into Withypool. When you meet the road coming in from the right and below (1hr55mins, [7]), your route continues straight ahead, but you might like to turn right first and explore the village and bridge. Refreshments are available at the seasonal tea rooms and the Royal Oak.

Follow the road out of Withypool past the Royal Oak. As it rises, take a signposted path to the left just beyond a '20%' sign ('permitted path to Exford via Room Hill'). Go up steps and through a small wood to come into a field with views back over Withypool. Continue along the right-hand bank, crossing two ladder stiles. A sign points diagonally across the field; the next gate is a little to the right of the direction indicated. Go through and keep to the left-hand side of two more fields until you come to a ladder stile on the left. After a kissing gate turn right, keep to the right-hand side of this field and the next. A final stile brings you to a road (2hr30mins, [8]). Cross the road and join a signposted bridleway running diagonally to the left over the open moor. It soon forks: keep left. Come to a signpost and continue ahead, towards Exford. Keep left and roughly level where the path splits. After crossing the head of a deep combe, turn right on a wider path towards Exford. Go through a gate followed by two lines of beech trees. After the second line of trees the path starts descending; turn left through a gate, again signposted to Exford (2hr50mins, [9]). You will have a panoramic view over Exford and beyond before the path goes through a gate into a small wood. The well-defined path now continues downhill towards Exford, becoming a vehicle track and eventually passing between houses. Where it comes to a junction at Court Farm (3hr5mins, [10]) turn right ('footpath to Exford and Winsford'), then immediately bear left to go over a bridge. On the far side of the bridge turn left through a gate and follow the path back to Exford.

Short walk around Exford (● 2.8 miles, ascents and descents of 150 metres). Follow the main route as far as the 50 minute-point, then turn left on the road. In under ten minutes, come to a house on the left. Just after the house, a signed footpath points left; follow it across the fields back to Exford.

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