



Walk 47. Dunster to Porlock via Luccombe and Horner.

- 9 miles, ascents and descents of 515 metres. 3 hours 50 minutes constant walking, allow 5-5½ hours total.

Terrain: Varied walking on paths, tracks and some roads; some parts potentially muddy.

Access: Park in Porlock and use bus 10 to travel to Minehead, changing to the 28 or 198 for Dunster; alternatively base yourself in Minehead and take bus 10 to Porlock, returning from Dunster on frequent bus 28 (bus 10 does not run on Sundays). In Porlock there may be a space next to the church (SS 886 466, near TA24 8LA), or park in the long-stay car park (SS 885 469, TA24 8PH, £).

Maps: The walk spans Croydecycle maps 01 Dunster and Minehead, 02 Porlock and 03 Horner and Dunkery, or use OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

Refreshments: In Dunster, seasonal tea garden at Horner, and in Porlock; wide choice in Minehead.

DUNSTER IS A FORMER MEDIEVAL PORT AND MARKET TOWN that remains remarkably well-preserved; modern development has generally not intruded into the main streets. Its castle has a similarly long history, starting as a Saxon hill-fort and evolving through Norman motte and bailey to a fortified manor, the basis of the present house. Porlock seems less remarkable, but it is interesting to explore and perhaps manages a better balance between the needs of residents and visitors. This walk connects the two via a varied inland route that first ascends on to the Grabbist ridge, then passes the quiet villages of Wootton Courtenay and Luccombe before heading along the edge of woods to Horner and on to Porlock.

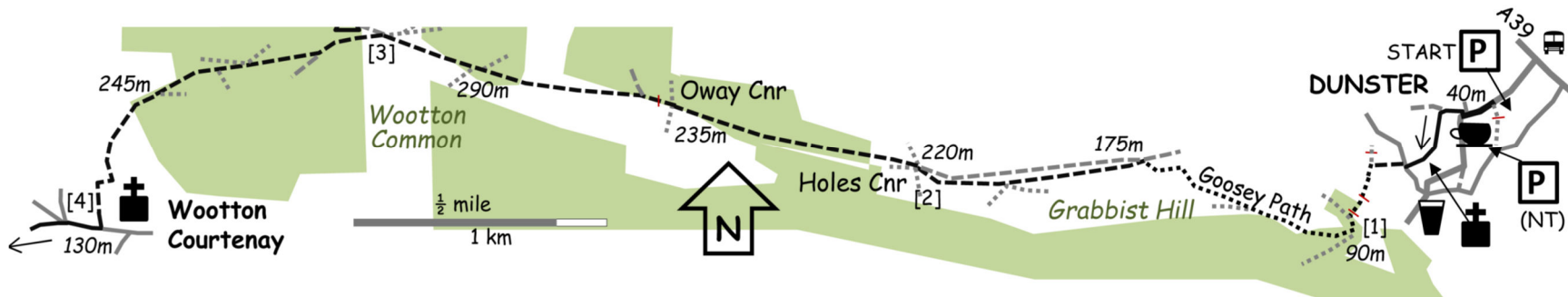
Starting the walk from the main car park in Dunster, pass a small shopping precinct and the National Park Centre on the left, then fork right on a narrow street between houses. Follow this around to the left, then go beneath an arch. A dovecote with a small garden is on the right, and through a door on the left is a walled garden belonging to the church. Come to a

road and cross diagonally right in front of the school, joining a lane signposted as a path. Turn left at a T-junction, pass the allotments and come to a cemetery. Go through a gate to take a footpath alongside the graveyard. After a second gate keep left. Shortly afterwards ignore a path that heads left downhill (15mins, [1]), keeping right towards Wootton Courtenay (this is Goosey Path); ascend gradually up the side of the hill. Ignore a track off to the left, then head more steeply uphill until you arrive at a seat and a National Trust sign. The next stage of the walk follows the Grabbist ridge westwards. Turn left on a broad path, which brings you to a second seat at a junction (Holes Corner, 55mins, [2]). Fork right (not the downhill path to the right) to continue along the ridge, with views opening up to Minehead and North Hill. Pass a crossing path, go past a vehicle barrier and continue ahead on a dirt path when the track bends right. Cross another diagonal path, keeping alongside the wood ('Tivington 2½'). Soon fork left (1hr30mins, [3]) then keep right at the next fork. At another fork keep left on the main path and start to descend, ignoring any forestry tracks heading off into the woods. The path joins a tarmac drive at Wootton Courtenay village hall then comes to a T-junction (1hr50mins, [4]). The village, with a church and small shop, is to the left; the walk continues to the right.

Soon turn left on a lane signposted to Brockwell. In ten minutes go over a cattle grid, come to the small hamlet of Brockwell, and when the lane bends left continue ahead on a wide unsurfaced track past a low metal barn (2hr5mins, [5]). At a stream bear right on the bridleway to Horner, keeping alongside a fence. You will go through a gate, across a small stream, then through another gate. Your way on is directly ahead, but go through a gate just up to the left to walk through Woodcock Gardens, a local nature reserve. Keep next to the right-hand boundary, cross a bridleway, then a couple of minutes later leave the reserve on the right to rejoin your original track, which has now narrowed. Continue beside a stream before crossing it and heading along the edge of the moorland at the foot of Dunkery Hill; your outward route can be seen up to the left. Ignore a crossing path and continue through woodland. Head uphill with a stone wall on your right, then join a track coming in from the left; the track now becomes a broad unsurfaced road between stone banks. Pass a stream, head uphill and go over a bridge. Now turn right on a restricted byway to Luccombe (2hr40mins, [6]).

Go through a gate and continue on a hard road into this little-visited gem of a village, with its mix of yellow-painted former estate cottages and more modern houses.

Walk through Luccombe to the crossroads, then turn left to pass the church, village green and park-

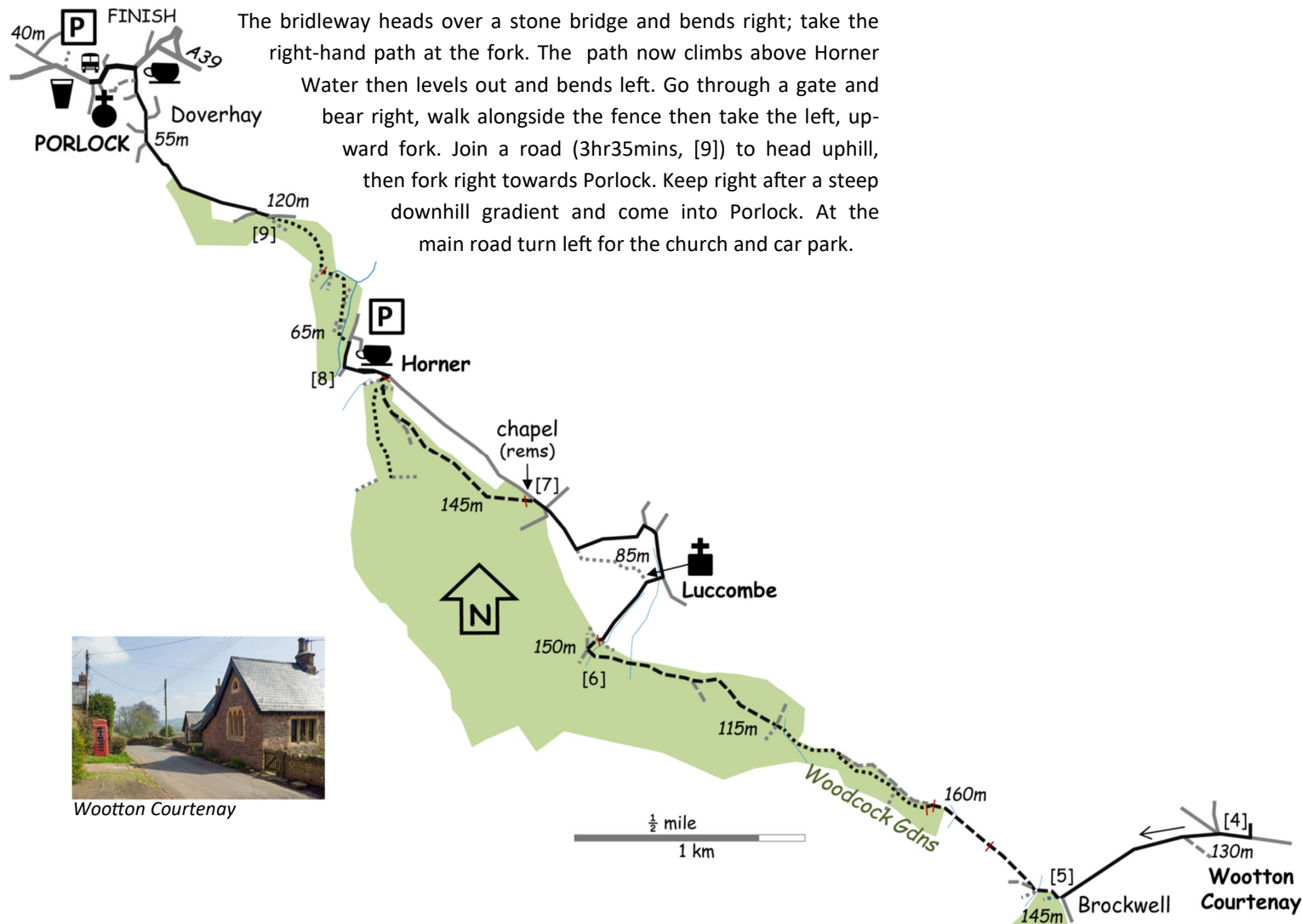


ing area. Turn left at the next junction, and the one after. Follow the road through a right-hand bend, then go straight on at a crossroads. The road will take you back to Horner, but it is very narrow and well-used by traffic, so shortly after the crossroads turn left on a track and go through a gate (3hrs, [7]; just beyond on the right-hand side of the road are the footings of medieval St Andrew's Chapel). Follow this broad track alongside the fence; you will catch occasional views of Selworthy and the Vale of Porlock. The path soon descends, and keeping right, rejoins your outward route. Go through the gate and turn left to arrive at Horner. The tea garden is on the right (3hr20mins, [8]). Follow the road around to the right then turn left on a signposted bridleway; if you come to the entrance to the National Trust car park on the right you have gone a few metres too far.

The bridleway heads over a stone bridge and bends right; take the right-hand path at the fork. The path now climbs above Horner Water then levels out and bends left. Go through a gate and bear right, walk alongside the fence then take the left, upward fork. Join a road (3hr35mins, [9]) to head uphill, then fork right towards Porlock. Keep right after a steep downhill gradient and come into Porlock. At the main road turn left for the church and car park.

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Wootton Courtenay