



Walk 50. Exford to Dunster via Dunkery Beacon.

- 11.5 miles, ascents of 500 metres and descents of 715 metres. 4 hours 30 minutes constant walking, allow 5½-6½ hours.

Terrain: Paths, tracks and roads including some narrow, steep and uneven paths across moorland. Two main climbs, one from the start to Dunkery and one after Wootton Courtenay on to the Grabbist ridge.

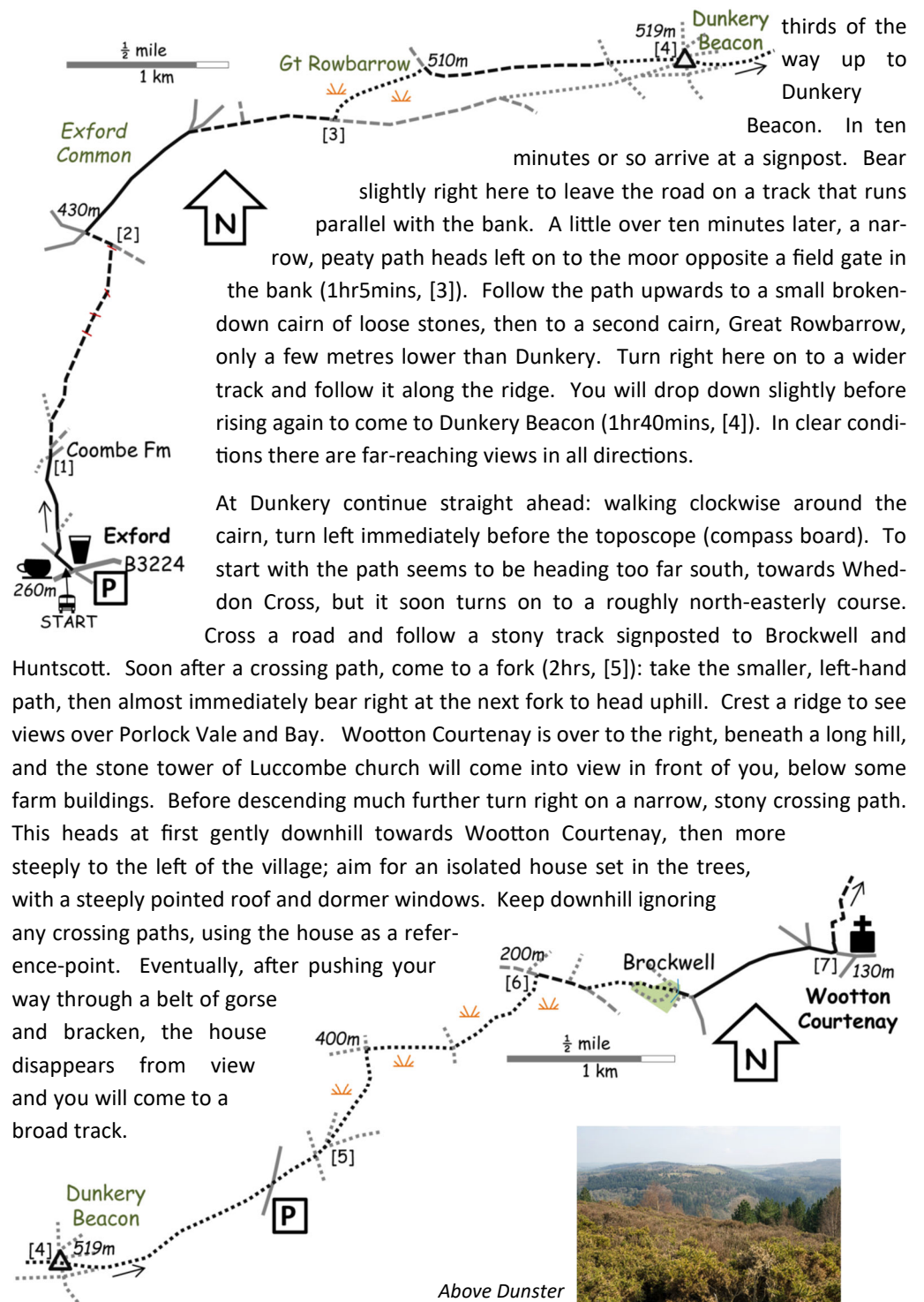
Access: Other than arranging a taxi or a lift there are three main options using Monday to Saturday bus 198 to connect start and finish. (1) Park in the main car park in Dunster (SS 993 439, TA24 6AS, £, or arrive on bus 28) and take the early afternoon bus (from the High Street, outside Jacob's) to Exford (only really feasible in the summer to avoid finishing the walk in the dark). (2) Park in Exford (SS 854 383, near TA24 7PP) and finish the walk early enough to catch the late afternoon bus back. (3) Start from Dulverton, taking the bus to Exford in the morning and returning from Dunster in the afternoon. Whichever option you choose, check the timetables first as not all buses stop in Exford.

Map: OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor. Using Croydecycle maps, the route starts on 53 Exford, there is then a gap almost to Dunkery, then you will need 03 Horner and Dunkery and either 00 Dunster for the main walk or 02 Porlock for the alternative finish.

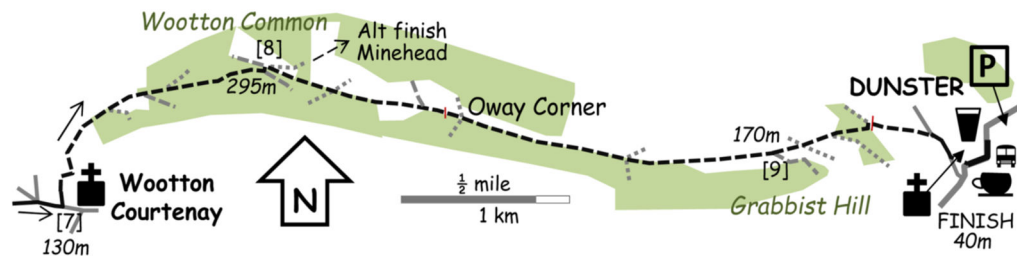
Refreshments: In Exford and Dunster (and Porlock and Minehead for the alternative walks).

THIS LINEAR WALK FROM EXFORD has the advantage of a bus connection, either between the start and finish or using Winsford, Dulverton or Wheddon Cross as a base. The walk is in two halves. After ascending from Exford the first stretch is across the highest part of Exmoor to Dunkery Beacon, followed by the descent of Dunkery Hill. On a clear day you will have views across Exmoor, up the Bristol Channel, and south to Dartmoor. The descent heads into the quiet village of Wootton Courtenay, before climbing again on to Wootton Common and the long, partly wooded ridge that ends in Grabbist Hill above Dunster. The character of this second half is quite different, with mixed woods, scrub and clearings, and views over Minehead and later the hills south of Dunster. Dunster itself, a former market town and now a well-preserved, visitor-oriented medieval village, is explored more fully in walk 73.

Start the walk from the village green in Exford, where the bus stops. Walk past the post office shop, then turn right into Combe Lane opposite the top of the green. Head uphill past Combe Farm (15mins, [1]). The road now becomes a stony track. Go through two field gates; when you are faced with two gates either side of a bank, the track continues through the right-hand one. Pass through a small camping site then go through a gate in a tree-topped bank (40mins, [2]). Turn left on the road. In about two minutes come to a crossroads, and turn right on a road alongside a beech bank. This is Exford Common; you are already nearly two-



Above Dunster



Turn right here (2hr30mins, [6]). A path, marked with a blue-topped post, heads left; ignore it, but at the next junction turn left as signposted towards Wootton Courtenay. Head into a birch wood, then bear left to follow a stone bank. Cross a shallow ford, turning left on to a lane (not the bridleway to Horner) to come to a thatched house. Keep left to walk in front of it and, seven or eight minutes later, reach the edge of Wootton Courtenay. Now turn right on a wider road, then take the first left, a bridleway (initially an access road) signposted Wootton Hill and Minehead (2hr55mins, [7]). The village centre and church are only a short distance along the road; they are worth a short pause to explore before turning on to the bridleway.

The bridleway continues past the village hall, becoming a dirt track and steepening rapidly. Ignore first a footpath then a wide track to the right. Another bridleway heads left to Periton and then an alternative path from Wootton Courtenay joins from the right. Three or four minutes later, the track splits: turn left then immediately right to keep the trees on your right, signposted Dunster and MAC Way (3hr30mins, [8]). Views open up on the left to North Hill, Minehead, and then to Blue Anchor and beyond. Ignore any crossing paths, keeping the woods to your right. Pass a seat, then come to a National Trust sign for Grabbist Hill. Shortly after, there is a choice of paths to Dunster (4hr10mins, [9]): head left here. Continue ahead at the next junction ('Dunster via Conduit Lane'). The path heads downhill and bends left, arriving at a gate on the right. Go through, and descend a stony track into Dunster. Turn right on to a road, then go through the churchyard and turn left to come to the village centre. Exford and Dulverton buses stop outside Jacob's shop.

Alternative finish 1: Minehead (● 11.5 miles, with ascents of 485m and descents of 735m). Bus 198 starts from Minehead, making the same travel arrangements possible as for the main walk. Immediately after the 3hr30min point ([8]) turn left off the ridge on a track, marked by a short blue-topped post. Keep right, with the conifers to your left. The path descends steeply and comes to another conifer wood in front of you. Keep ahead (slightly to the left) as you enter it, then bear left and downhill at the next junction. When you meet a T-junction, turn right and stroll down Periton Combe to the A39. Cross this fast road carefully into Periton Lane opposite. A little further on turn left into Whitworth Road, following it almost until it bears right. Fork left on to a footpath beside a small stream at the back of some houses. Turn right at a T-junction and follow the path alongside the stream and through a linear park. At a

road turn right then left; the path opens out into another area of park enclosed behind the gardens of houses. At its end follow the path to the right, then turn left on a road. Turn left at the T-junction, and walk down Minehead's main shopping street to the town centre and sea front. The return bus leaves from the station bus stop.

Alternative finish 2: Porlock (● 8.5 miles, with ascents of 370m and descents of 590m). It is currently possible to use two buses to travel from Porlock to Exford, arriving early afternoon, but not to do the journey in reverse. Follow the main walk to Dunkery Beacon, then take a wide path to the left to join **walk 55**, continuing to Horner and Porlock.

Shorter walks from Dunkery Gate: By taxi or with two cars, start the walk from Dunkery Gate (SS 895 406). Take the signposted footpath to Dunkery Beacon to join the main walk at the 1hr40min point ([4]). The length of the walk is reduced by 3 miles, and ascents by 150 metres.

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