



### Walk 64. Dulverton, Hawkrigde and the River Barle.

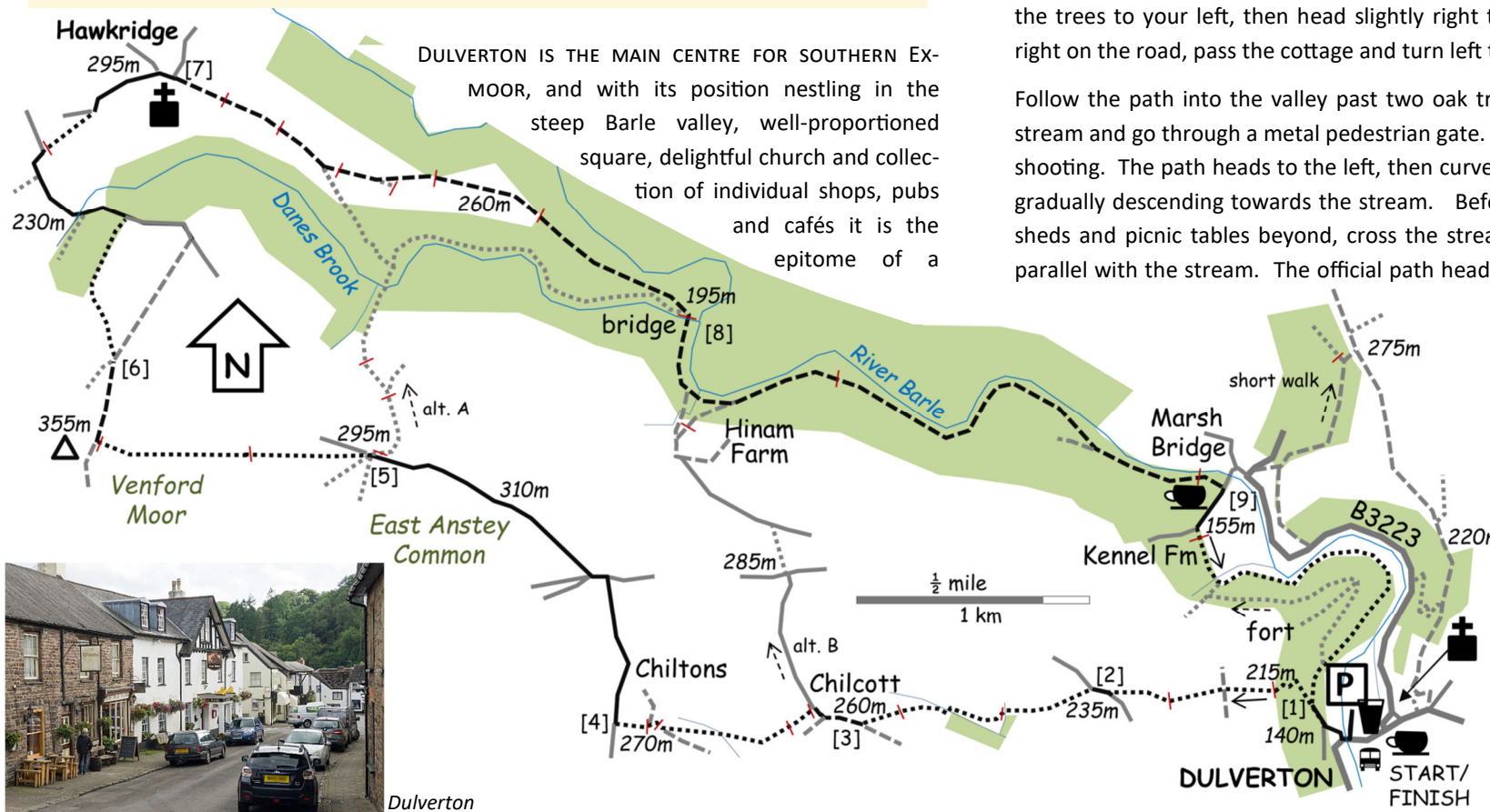
- 10.7 miles, ascents and descents of 550 metres. 4 hours 15 minutes constant walking, allow around 5½ hours.

Terrain: Paths, tracks and fields, muddy in places, two small streams to cross. Some road walking and a short easy stretch of open moorland.

Access: By car, park in the long-stay car park next to Exmoor House (SS 912 280, TA22 9HL, £). Dulverton is served by bus 25 from Taunton and Bampton, 198 from Minehead and 398 from Tiverton and Bampton.

Map: Croydecycle 56 Dulverton and Tarr Steps or OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor (a small part of the outward route is on 114 Exeter and the Exe Valley).

Refreshments: Plenty of options in Dulverton; tea garden at Marsh Bridge.



small West Country market town. Starting with a blank canvas it would be difficult to design anything better, other than maybe reinstating the railway line. Dulverton is also the home of the National Park Authority, based in the old Victorian workhouse, and there is an excellent display about life in times past in a small museum at the back of the information centre. Several walks start or finish here; this one explores some of the high ground between Dulverton and Anstey Common, with a return route along the River Barle.

From the car park, walk past the statue of Lorna Doone to the Bridge Inn, then turn right over the Barle bridge. Turn immediately right on a minor road, and in less than a minute continue straight ahead as the road bends left. Again in less than a minute keep right at a fork, following the small purple arrow and sign to Horner Cottage. Immediately after the cottage (7mins, [1]) fork left on a narrow path signposted to Beech Tree Cross. Ascend steeply on this stony, slippery path; in winter you will have views over Dulverton to the right. When the path comes to a T-junction (the right-hand 'turn' is a water run-off), turn left and upwards and then go through a gate into a field. Keeping the hedge to your right, come to a gate and cross the farm road into a second field. Cross the field ahead and go through a gate. Keep the trees to your left, then head slightly right to an isolated cottage. Go over a stile, turn right on the road, pass the cottage and turn left through the next gate (25mins, [2]).

Follow the path into the valley past two oak trees. At the bottom, splash through a small stream and go through a metal pedestrian gate. Be careful as this field is used for clay pigeon shooting. The path heads to the left, then curves right around the shoulder of the hill before gradually descending towards the stream. Before arriving at the stump of an ash tree with sheds and picnic tables beyond, cross the stream to the left on a plank bridge. Turn right parallel with the stream. The official path heads diagonally left at a yellow marker post, but

depending on the height of the bracken it can be easier to continue to the corner of the field and turn left on the grass there. At the top go through a vehicle gate, then immediately right through a pedestrian gate. There is a field gate ahead of you; head slightly to its left to a gate hidden in the corner of the field. Go through this small gate and turn right on to a stone track (45mins, [3]). Pass the farm houses and continue ahead on a surfaced road, soon passing two vehicle tracks on the left; shortly afterwards turn left through a gate on a track marked as a footpath.

Keep to the left-hand edge of the field. Go through a gate, initially keeping left. Follow the track when it bends right through a young wood, with a rather grand house (Chiltons) ahead of you. Cross a stream then turn right at a T-junction; go through a gate then immediately turn left and go through successive gates. Keep to the right-hand side of the field, turning right on to the road (1hr, [4]). At a T-junction turn left to enter Devon, then first right towards Hawkridge. In a little under fifteen minutes the road heads downhill and around a gentle bend. Just beyond look for a signposted bridleway (1hr30mins, [5]). Turn left, but take the rightmost of the three paths, heading almost parallel with the road. Pass two clumps of gorse and a footpath sign, then go through a pedestrian gate ahead of you. The path becomes a stony track and starts to head uphill. Passing between more gorse, head for a gate ahead and slightly to the right, where the taller trees end. Go through and turn right on a wide track (a public bridleway). In about five minutes, turn left on a signposted permissive footpath (1hr50mins, [6]). This is vague at first, but head downhill slightly to the left of the cluster of houses (Hawkridge) on the hillside in front of you. The path soon becomes better-defined, and passes a stone ('Venford', difficult to make out) where there are views west along the valley of Danes Brook. It soon narrows and bends gradually right, arriving at a road. Turn left here, heading steeply downhill to cross Danes Brook (and return to Somerset).

An equally steep road heads uphill. Pass a stone farm building, then when the road bends sharply left go through the gate ahead of you. Head in the direction indicated on the bridleway sign, aiming to the left of the roof of a house. Turn right on the road and follow it through Hawkridge to the church (2hr20mins, [7]). Continue ahead here past a cottage on a lane (restricted byway) signposted to Dulverton. The lane heads alongside a field, left through a fenced-off section and then across another field before coming to a gate into woods; ignore any right turns. Go through the gate, and note a young tree on the left growing from the stump of an older one. The track now descends towards the Barle, on the left, with Danes Brook on the right. Two Iron Age forts sit on the wooded hilltops: Brewer's Castle to the left, and Mounsey Castle ahead. Cross a stone bridge on the right (2hr55mins, [8]), and follow the track ahead. Pass a track turning off to the right. After splashing through a stream the walk continues ahead, parallel with the river. After 30 minutes or so you will come to a large white house. Bear left on to a wider track just beyond it. Follow the river as far as a house on the right, at the junction with a road (3hr40mins, [9]). Turn right here, then in three minutes or so turn left on a signposted footpath through a farm. Go through a kissing gate, then two or three minutes further on keep left at a path junction. The path undulates, keeping roughly parallel with the river. After a final ascent with glimpses across Dulverton, join a tarmac drive, keep left down to the road, and turn left over the bridge to return to Dulverton.

**Alternative walk A: Dulverton and Danes Brook** (● 8.5 miles, ascents and descents of 430 metres). This alternative route misses out Hawkridge, but uses an attractive woodland path to descend to Danes Brook and follow it downstream to its junction with the River Barle. Follow the main walk to the 1hr30min point ([5]). Turn right here through a gate on a signposted bridleway, following the path downhill. Almost immediately after a second gate keep left at a fork with a low signpost. Descend to a pedestrian gate and continue downhill through oak woods to Danes Brook. Cross the footbridge and keep ahead; ignore a crossing path and a signposted path to Hawkridge. The path continues through the wood and returns to Danes Brook. Walk beside it until you reach a stone bridge close to its junction with the River Barle. Cross the bridge, rejoining the main walk at the 2hr55min point ([8]) to return to Dulverton.

**Alternative walk B: Dulverton and the River Barle via Hinam Farm** (● 6 miles, ascents and descents of 350 metres). Follow the main walk to the 50-minute point ([3]) and pass the farm buildings, but stay on the road until it comes to a T-junction. Cross over and go through a kissing gate. Keep the field boundary to your right, then go through another gate, down some steps, and turn left on a narrow road. Where this turns sharp right to Hinam Farm, continue ahead on a rough track ('unsuitable for motors'). Start to follow the track downhill, then take the right fork and pass a gate. Rejoin the main walk shortly after the 2hr55min point ([8]), splashing through the stream.

**Short walk: Dulverton and Marsh Bridge** (● 3.7 miles, ascents and descents of 250 metres). Start as for the main walk. At the 7-minute point [1], continue ahead and follow the path above the River Barle. This lower path will take you to Kennel Farm, but instead take the next turn left (Middle Path). Detour to the left to Oldberry Castle, an Iron Age hillfort, returning the same way. Continuing left along Middle Path, come to a T-junction and turn right. At the bottom, turn left to rejoin the lower path and splash through a stream, then go through a gate to arrive at Kennel Farm. Turn right on to the road; in four minutes or so cross a bridge and turn right into a small parking area, then go over a stone footbridge. Cross the road in front of you and walk up a steep tarmac slope, then cross the next road to join a byway heading up and to the left ('restricted byway to Court Down and North Combe'). Ignore a track to the right and head steeply uphill to a T-junction, with a seat almost opposite. Turn right here; this stony, sometimes muddy track descends into Dulverton, after some twists and turns coming out next to the church. Continue ahead into the centre and (if you can avoid the temptation of the shops, pubs and cafés) back to the car park.

© Stan Lester 2018-23. Last recce 1/2023. Please email [editor@exmoorwalker.uk](mailto: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](http://exmoorwalker.uk).*