



Walk 77. Roadwater, Nettlecombe and Monksilver.

- 8.3 miles, ascents and descents of 500 metres. 3 hours 35 minutes constant walking, allow 4½-5 hours.

Terrain: Mainly paths, tracks and fields.

Access: Unless there is an event on in the village hall, park behind the shop in Roadwater (ST 032 383, TA23 0QY; not in the bays outside the shop). There is also usually room to park on a straight stretch of road opposite the garage in Lower Roadwater (ST 036 390, TA23 0RS), which adds half a mile at the start and end of the walk (with the garage on your left, walk into Roadwater). There is also a large car park at the 'EMN' hall at Monksilver (ST 076 374, TA4 4JE), again subject to events. The nearest bus is the 28 from Taunton to Minehead that stops at Washford, two miles from the start.

Map: OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor. Most of the walk—except Nettlecombe to Monksilver—is also on Croydecycle map 14 Roadwater.

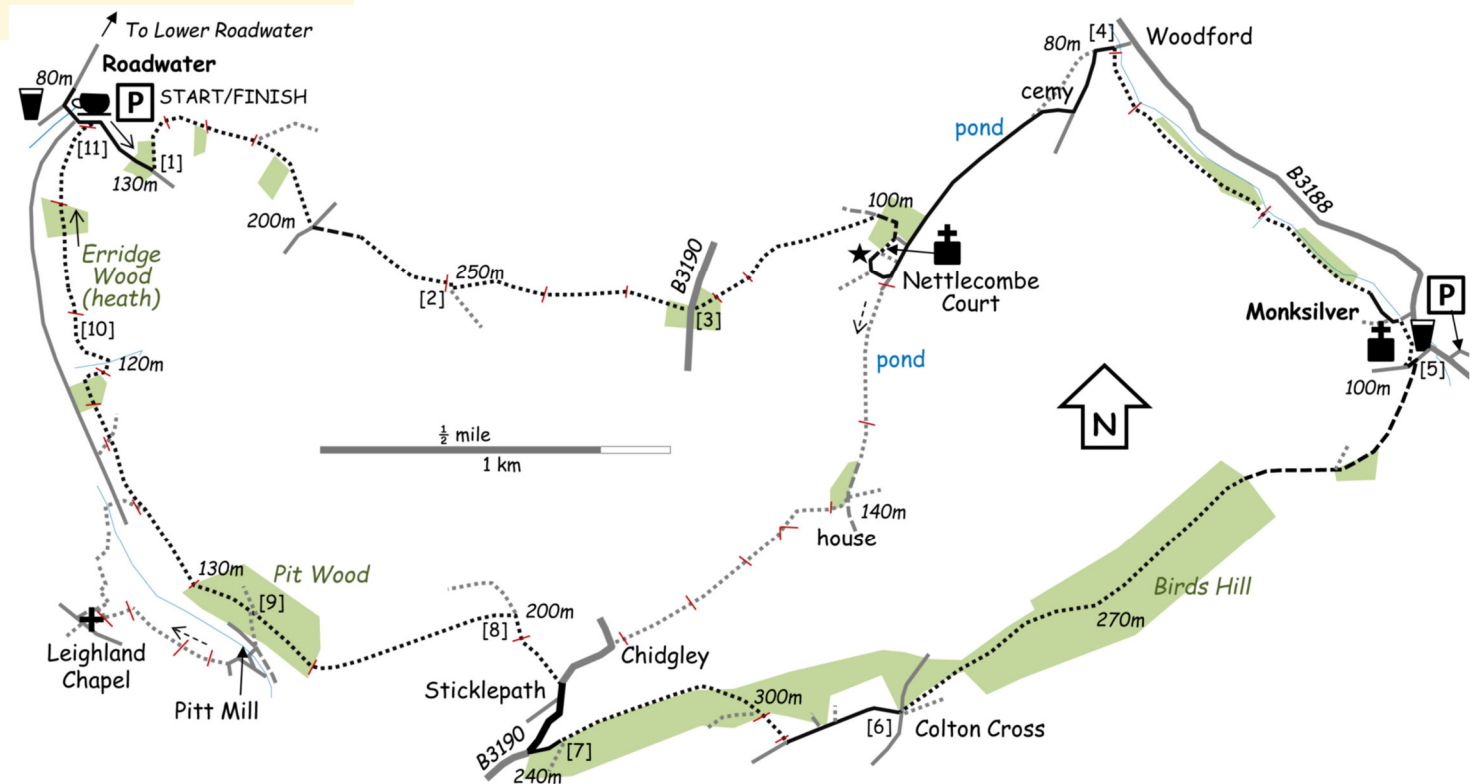
Refreshments: Café at the shop in Roadwater (closes early afternoon), pubs in Roadwater and Monksilver.

THIS IS A WALK AMONG ROLLING HILLS on the often overlooked eastern edge of Exmoor National Park. It takes in the attractive villages of Roadwater and Monksilver, as well as the manor and hamlet of Nettlecombe, now the home of a field studies centre. There are some steep sections including the initial climb from Roadwater and a mile of ascent from Monksilver, but the rewards are the views across the lush, undulating landscape and (in the first half of the walk) the Bristol Channel. The final part of the walk includes an optional detour to the Mineral Line, which is explored more fully in walk 76, and Leighland Chapel.

Start from the shop and café in Roadwater (ST 032 383). Turn left on to the road, then immediately after Watersmeet Close turn left to go over a small bridge. Walk past some houses and up a steep hill. Where the road bends right, turn left and upwards on a path ('to Chidgley', 15mins, [1]). Continue into a field, keep left, and very soon go over a stile on the left; now turn right uphill keeping the hedge on your right. Go through a gate, then over a stile into another field. Ignore the path

going off to the left, continuing upwards with a belt of trees on your right. Follow the field boundary around to the left, cross a narrow lane and head upwards on a sandy track. In the next field continue ahead and uphill with the hedge on your left. The gradient soon levels out. There is a stile just to the right of the field corner (40mins, [2]): go over it and continue straight ahead with the hedge now to your right (ignore the right turn, which goes to Chidgley). Follow the path along the field edge and through two gates, eventually coming to a larger road (50mins, [3]). Cross over and enter a small wood with some venerable oaks. Follow the path ahead through the woods and then through bracken. Go over a stile into the field in front of you. Follow the path with the field edge on your right, passing some tall chestnuts. Cut the far corner of the field to go through an opening with a yellow-topped post, turning right on a grassy track towards houses. Bear right on a track, pass a large house on your left (the former stable block), then walk through the churchyard to come to the imposing Nettlecombe Court, a sixteenth century house that is now a field studies centre (1hr). The manor at Nettlecombe dates from Saxon times. It has never been sold but only passed between owners by succession, conquest, grant or marriage.

Leave Nettlecombe by turning left around the green, so that the church is on your left: follow the access road, passing a pond on the left, and turning left where it comes to a T-junction at a cemetery gate. Soon after a right-hand bend take a footpath to the right signposted to



Monksilver (1hr20mins, [4]): if you reach the main road you have gone too far. Walk along the field edge then go over a stile to the left, soon followed by a second stile. A yellow arrow on the tree in front of you points the way ahead, with the trees to your left. The path shadows the B3188, the road to Monksilver, which can be heard through the trees below. Come to a yellow-tipped post and drop down to a gate. Cross a small stream that runs at a right angle to the valley, then climb up again to follow the path into a wooded strip. Walk under the trees for some way before being directed back along the field edge. The path passes a telegraph pole then turns left and right to come to the head of a cul-de-sac.

In Monksilver, head for the church: take a narrow path to the left of a red telephone box. If you are in need of refreshment, the Notley Arms is to the left: otherwise continue through the churchyard, turn left on to the road, then almost immediately right uphill on a bridleway (1hr40mins, [5]). The next mile is a steady ascent, which will bring you into a wood and eventually to a pleasant glade with some stout, spreading beech trees. From here the bridleway heads slightly to the right towards Colton Cross: look for the blue marker on the tree. At a junction (2hr25mins, [6]) continue ahead on a tarmac road. A short signposted detour to the right will bring you to an escarpment with views across the Bristol Channel. On the road, pass a grassy track and just afterwards turn right through a gate on a signposted bridleway. Follow it to a wood: you are now at the highest point of the walk, at 300m above sea level. Entering the wood, take the right-hand, downward fork. Views now open up to the right across Nettlecombe and beyond as the ground drops steeply to your right.

At a bridleway junction (2hr40mins, [7]), keep right and descend past a house to a main road. This is Sticklepath. Turn right, looking out for traffic: cars come around the bends at speed. Pass a no through road to the left and immediately afterwards turn left on to a bridleway. Where this comes to a crossroads (2hr50mins, [8]), take the left-hand (bridleway) route towards Roadwater. Continue along a path beneath the line of trees: don't descend into the valley, as there is no way through at the bottom. Pass through a gate into a wood. You are now above the Washford River valley and the route of the old West Somerset Mineral Line, which carried iron ore down from the Brendon Hills to Watchet for onward transport by sea (see walk 71). When the track comes to a wide junction, continue ahead and slightly to the left (3hr5mins, [9]). Unless you want to detour via Leighland Chapel or the Mineral Line, ignore a narrow path turning off to the left.

Soon go through a gate and walk alongside a dry stone bank topped with beech trees. A little later ignore another path on the left for Leighland Chapel. A couple of minutes further on go straight ahead at a crossing path and soon enter a small wood. Come to a small valley and divert slightly to cross a stream. Follow the path up the far side (3hr20mins, [10]). This area was once woodland, but it was felled a few years ago and is now regenerating as an attractive and diverse heathland. After crossing a short belt of beech trees the path enters a field and goes through gates. When you meet the road (3hr30mins, [11]) turn left over the bridge, then either left for the Valiant Soldier inn, or right to return to the start.

Detour to Leighland Chapel (adds half a mile and 45m of ascent). At the 3hr5min point ([9]) turn left to descend on a steep, narrow path marked 'Mineral Line'. This brings you to Pitt Mill. Cross the lane (the former railway) to continue towards Leighland, then at the next junction turn right on a track. Where it bends left, turn right on a path (a stone indicates 'Pit Farm'). Cross in front of the farm and go through a gate to join a narrow path. A second gate takes you into a field; keep along its edge to come to a third gate, slightly to the left. Climb on a sunken lane until it comes to gardens. Enter the churchyard through a gate on the left. The 'chapel' is a full-sized church, built in the 1860s to replace a chapel of ease. Go through the gate to turn right on the road, then right again at a post box on to an access lane. This leads to a narrower path that descends to cross a stream before arriving back at the old mineral railway. Turn left here and either continue along the lane to Roadwater, or take the next signposted path right to rejoin the main walk (turn left at the crossing path, which will soon bring you to the stream valley just before point [10]).

Shorter walk: Roadwater and Nettlecombe (● 5.6 miles, ascents and descents of 330 metres). Follow the main route as far as Nettlecombe. With your back to the house, cross the green and turn right to go through an iron kissing gate beside a field gate. Follow a grassy track upwards into a valley. Pass a pond, continue uphill, and go through two gates; the path now becomes narrower. At a signpost beneath a spreading oak, turn right ('Chidgley') to pass to the side of a house and alongside a stone shed, before bearing left through a pedestrian gate. Continue steeply upwards alongside the fence, cross two stiles at a field corner, and cross the field diagonally, heading well to the left of a domed, bushy tree. Go through the leftmost of the two field gates, marked by yellow paint. Follow the clearly-defined track through a second gate; at the farm, go through a pedestrian gate in a tall fence to come out in front of a large house. Turn left on the road, walk uphill, and turn right on a bridleway to rejoin the main walk just before the 2hr50min point ([8]).



Nettlecombe Court

© Stan Lester 2018-23. Last recce 8/2023. 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.