



Walk 81. The eastern side of Wimbleball.

- 6 miles, ascents and descents of 225 metres. 2 hours 25 minutes constant walking, allow 3-3½ hours overall.

Terrain: Generally well-kept paths and tracks; the first part of the walk can be muddy and slippery after wet weather. Undulating, but no steep climbs.

Access: Park at Bessom Bridge car park (SS 975 318, currently free) where the causeway crosses the northern end of the reservoir. There is also a small parking area on the right heading from Bessom Bridge towards Ruggs Farm (SS 977 317). No buses.

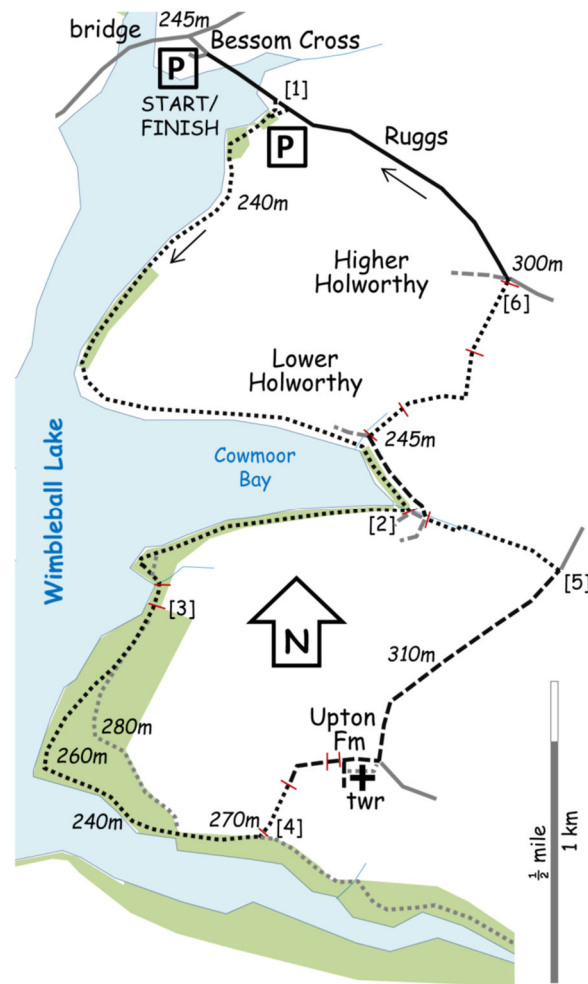
Map: Croydecycle 16 Wimbleball or OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

Refreshments: Seasonal kiosk at the car park on the opposite side of the lake. The nearest pubs are in Brompton Regis and Upton.

THIS THIRD WIMBLEBALL WALK follows the lakeside path around two contrasting headlands on the eastern side of the lake. The first one is more open and a popular place for dog walkers, while the second is wooded and generally quieter. The return, via farm tracks, lanes and fields, passes the 14th-century church of St James, at Upton Farm, of which only the tower and some low walls remain. A new church was built in Upton village in the late 1860s and the old one, other than the tower, had been demolished by the end of the century.

From the car park turn right and walk along the road; it is technically a causeway, though you can't see the lake through the hedges. Just beyond a small parking area (5mins, [1]) turn right on a footpath ('lakeside circular walk'). This takes you past a bird hide. Follow the path above the shore; you will soon come opposite the sailing club (20mins), then the path curves left to follow an 'arm' of the lake. Towards the end of the 'arm' it continues on boardwalks and over a small bridge. Keep right in front of a field gate (40mins, [2]) to continue on the lakeside path (the shorter walk goes through the gate here, signposted to Ruggs Hill, then turns left on the track). Returning towards the main part of the lake, keep right where the path splits and walk around a small headland, then after the paths rejoin go through a gate at a stream. Continue uphill to a second gate (55mins, [3]), then two or three minutes later turn right on the 'rugged lakeside path'. It is not particularly rugged (it can be muddy and slippery) and it doesn't quite descend to the lakeside though there are glimpses of the water through the oak woods. Pass a turn to the right, then the path descends almost to the shore before climbing up again. It rejoins the upper path at a signposted T-junction; turn right here. About three minutes later turn left over a stile, signposted St James' Church (1hr20mins, [4]).

Keep to the left-hand edge of the field then go through a gate to join a farm drive. Bend around to the right and walk through two more gates to pass Upton Farm. St James's Church



St James's Tower

is on the right; you can walk around the churchyard but the tower is closed. Just after the church turn left on to a rough lane ('bridleway and footpath only'). In a little over ten minutes this comes to a small parking area on the left (1hr40mins, [5]). Turn left here on the footpath.

The path follows a stream, sidesteps over it and comes to a gate. Go through and turn right towards Ruggs Hill. In five minutes or so look out for a footpath to the right into a field. This starts as an enclosed path, but you may soon need to step over the fence to avoid overgrown trees (if you find yourself on the wrong side of a marshy area you will soon pass its source spring and can return to the line of the original path). Continue into the next field, at first heading along the right-hand edge then crossing to a pedestrian gate slightly to the left. In the third field walk alongside the overgrown original path on the left. This brings you to a narrow road at the entrance to Higher Holworthy (2hr10mins, [6]); turn left to follow it back to Bessom Bridge.

Shorter version: loop around Holworthy

- 3.3 miles, ascents and descents of 110 metres). Follow the main walk to the field gate ([2]), turning left through it and left again on the track to Ruggs Hill. Follow the instructions in the previous paragraph to return to the start.