



Walk 83. Bampton and Cove.

- 7.7 miles, ascents and descents of 400 metres. 3 hours 10 minutes continuous walking, allow around 4 hours.

Terrain: Roads, wide tracks, paths and fields. Some potentially slippery sections and a small stream to cross before Shute Farm.

Access: By car, park in Bampton (there are two car parks, a small one by the river at SS 959 222, near EX16 9LX, and a larger one off Station Road, SS 956 222, EX16 9QJ). By bus, route 25 (Taunton to Dulverton) stops opposite the war memorial, and 398 (Tiverton to Dulverton) in Brook Street; buses run Monday to Saturday.

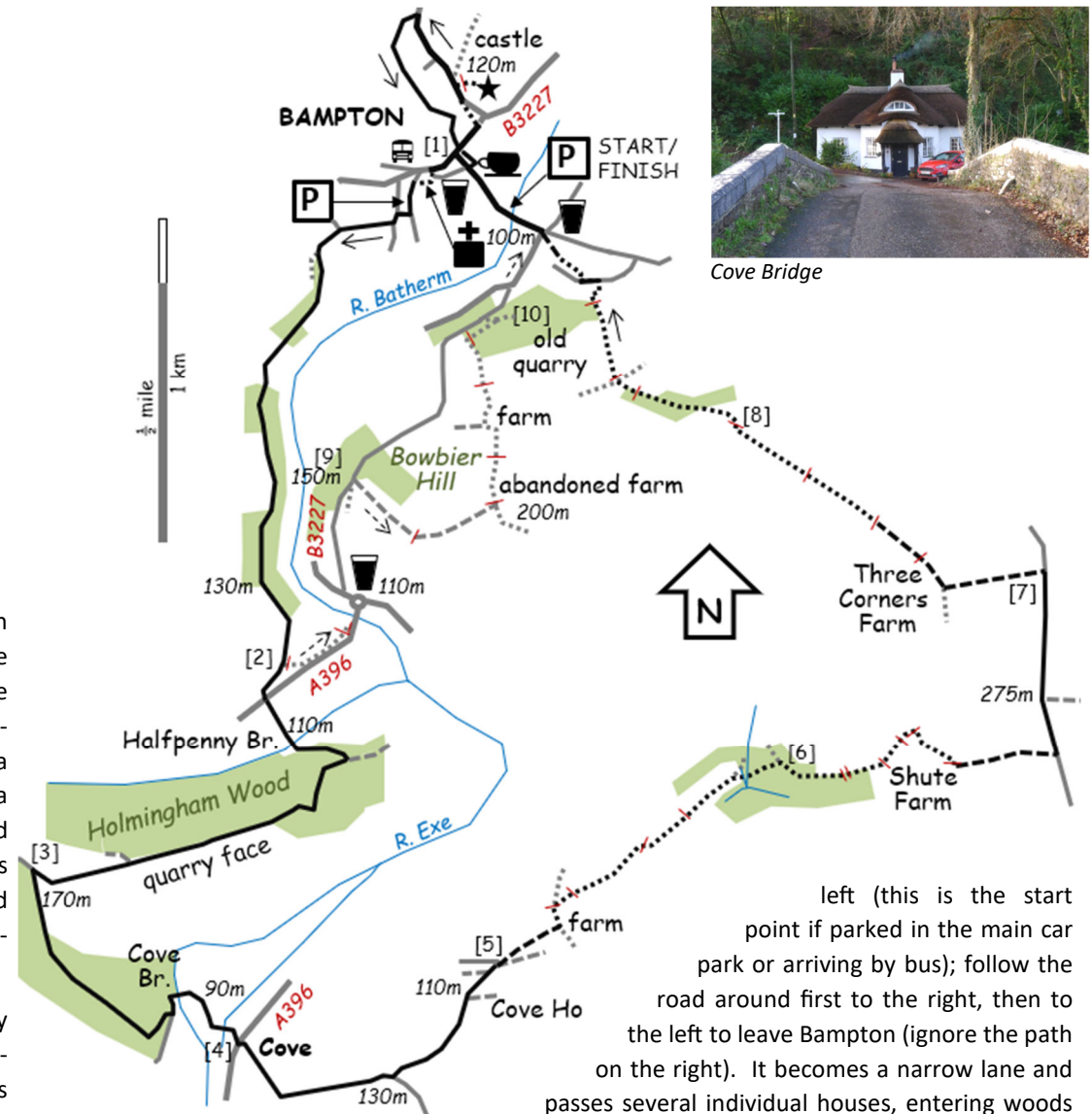
Map: OS Explorer 114 Exeter and the Exe Valley.

Refreshments: In Bampton, and for the shorter walk at the Exeter Inn on the A396.

BAMPTON RECEIVED ITS CHARTER AS A MARKET TOWN IN 1258 and it still holds an annual fair in the last week of October, though you are more likely to come away with some local produce than an Exmoor pony or a flock of sheep. By the beginning of the 20th century it had become a major quarrying centre with a busy railway terminus; the dams at Clatworthy and Wimbleball are built from Bampton stone, as is the original Exeter bypass. Nowadays Bampton has a relaxed and village-like atmosphere combining bucolic charm with the no-nonsense feel of a former industrial town. Despite being off the tourist trail it is as well-served by eateries and tearooms as nearby Dulverton. This walk explores the town before heading out on lanes along the Batherm and Exe valleys to the small village of Cove, returning via hills, woods and fields. The shorter version, over Bowbier Hill, is slightly more than a stroll because of the gradients, but it makes for a pleasant morning or afternoon walk.

Start at the Batherm bridge, turning right out of the car park to walk along Brook Street away from the river. Head to the right of the estate agents, walking in front of a row of stone-fronted houses. Turn right on meeting a main road, then left to join the B3190 towards Morebath and Wimbleball Lake. Turn right opposite the bungalow 'Cresta', and go through a wide gate on the right into a playing field. Walk up some steps on the right to ascend the motte (mound) of Bampton Castle, where you have views back over the town. Return the same way, turning right on the road. Take the second left, a country lane, then turn left at the T-junction to pass some unusual metal-roofed houses. This winding lane is called Frog Street; look out for frog-themed house names as you come back into Bampton (25mins, [1]).

Now turn right and head for the church: take a path signposted 'visitor centre', just to the left of a red telephone box. Keep to the right-hand side of the church, leave the churchyard between two houses, then turn left. Turn right at a children's playground then immediately



Cove Bridge

left (this is the start point if parked in the main car park or arriving by bus); follow the road around first to the right, then to the left to leave Bampton (ignore the path on the right). It becomes a narrow lane and passes several individual houses, entering woods and rising high above the River Batherm. After cresting a hill come to a house on the left. A couple of minutes later the short walk leaves to the left on a signposted footpath (55mins, [2]). For the main walk continue ahead until you reach the A396 at a house. Continue across, then cross the River Exe on Halfpenny Bridge. Turn left in front of the cottage, following the lane uphill and around a sharp bend. A quarry face, invisible from the road, falls steeply away on your left. Pass a house on the right, then about four minutes later turn left on a lane signposted to Cove (1hr20mins, [3]). This brings you down to Cove Bridge, overlooked by a picturesque cottage. Cross the river, then a little later cross a stream by the remains of a mill.

Come to the A396 again (1hr35mins, [4]), cross carefully, and head up the lane opposite towards Huntsham and the village hall to start the steepest section of the walk. In ten minutes turn left at a house on a junction. Pass the entrance to Cove House on the right, then Cove Cottage further on to the left. Soon afterwards the road bends sharply left; continue directly ahead on a lane marked as a public bridleway (the left fork; 1hr55mins, [5]). Just before arriving at a farmhouse turn left on a footpath, ascending steeply. Go through a gate and turn right to walk along the field edge (not on the path out into the field); after the next gate turn left and behind a ruined building, keeping right along the field edge. Pass a wooden tower. Two or three minutes later bear right to join an enclosed path which will bring you to a gate. Continue into the woods. At a signpost turn right to splash through two small streams. Keep uphill until you come to a T-junction (2hr15mins, [6]); turn right here. Start to head uphill, ignore a minor path to the right, then go through two gates in quick succession. A path diversion takes you clockwise around Shute Farm. The final gate brings you to some farm buildings. Turn left here and walk along the farm service road, turning left at a T-junction.

You will soon have views across the downs beyond Bampton. Pass a house on the right, a minute later turning left on a track towards Three Corners Farm (2hr40mins, [7]). Pass a new weatherboarded house on the left then turn right on a drive. Go over a stile and through a kissing gate. Keep the field edge to your right. Go over a second stile, along the edge of a large field, then through a gate. Just before the end of the next field turn right through a pedestrian gate, now keeping the field edge on your left (2hr55mins, [8]). Go through a gap, then slightly left to the corner of the next field; Bampton comes into view on the right. Keep to the left alongside the trees, then go through a gate and head downhill on an enclosed path. Cross a track, go through a gate and head downhill on an uneven stony path alongside a ditch or rill. Go through another gate and after a possibly slippery slope come to a road among houses. Turn left, then look out for narrow a path to the right, just after no. 12; this brings you into Bampton. Continue down the road to the bridge.

Shorter walk: Bampton and Bowbier Hill (● 3.8 miles, ascents and descents of 210 metres). Follow the main walk to the 55min point ([2]). Turn left on the signposted footpath and cross the field. Go over a stile and through a gate, then turn left on the main road to come to the Exeter Inn roundabout. Turn left in front of the inn, then right and upwards on a narrow lane just after the pub car park. Arrive at a long white house (1hr15mins, [9]). The easy route back is straight ahead, but a more scenic one is to turn right between an avenue of trees. At the end, go through a gate and follow the track to the left and across a field to a partly derelict farm. Go left here and over a stile. Bear very slightly right with Bampton in front of you, go over two stiles, and head downhill to a farmhouse. Follow the signs around the farm and cross the fields ahead of you. The path seems to disappear; almost at the end of the field turn right over a stile into woods. Coming to a path junction (1hr35mins, [10]), the official

route back is to turn left, turn right to rejoin the lane coming down from the white house, then turn right again at a T-junction to arrive at the Quarryman's Rest inn back in Bampton (the river is on the left). Turn left for the bridge.

An alternative, not a right of way but used by locals, keeps right at the path junction ([10]) then heads right past a gate and through a cutting in the rock; turn left to walk along the quarry floor, now a wooded valley, and meet a footpath above some houses. Turn left on the path and walk down to join a residential road, as for the main walk. Turn left, then look out for a narrow path to the right just after no. 12; this brings you into Bampton. Continue down the road to the bridge.

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