



Walk 89. Circuit of Clatworthy Reservoir.

- 5 miles, ascents and descents of 185 metres. 1 hour 50 minutes continuous walking, allow around 3 hours. No dogs.

Terrain: Paths, generally well-made though some slippery shale and mud.

Access: By car (no bus service). Park in the free car park at the reservoir, approached by narrow lanes from Clatworthy or Huish Champflower (ST 043 311; TA4 2EJ points to the beginning of the access road). The gates are locked at sunset or as indicated on the board at the road entrance. There is also another small car park at the end of Syndercombe Lane (SS 036 308, [3] on the map), accessed from the B3224/B3190 at Brendon Hill. The alternative longer walk starts at Raleigh's Cross Inn (TA23 0LN, parking with permission) or in the layby on the B3190 just to its west (ST 037 344); see overleaf for instructions.

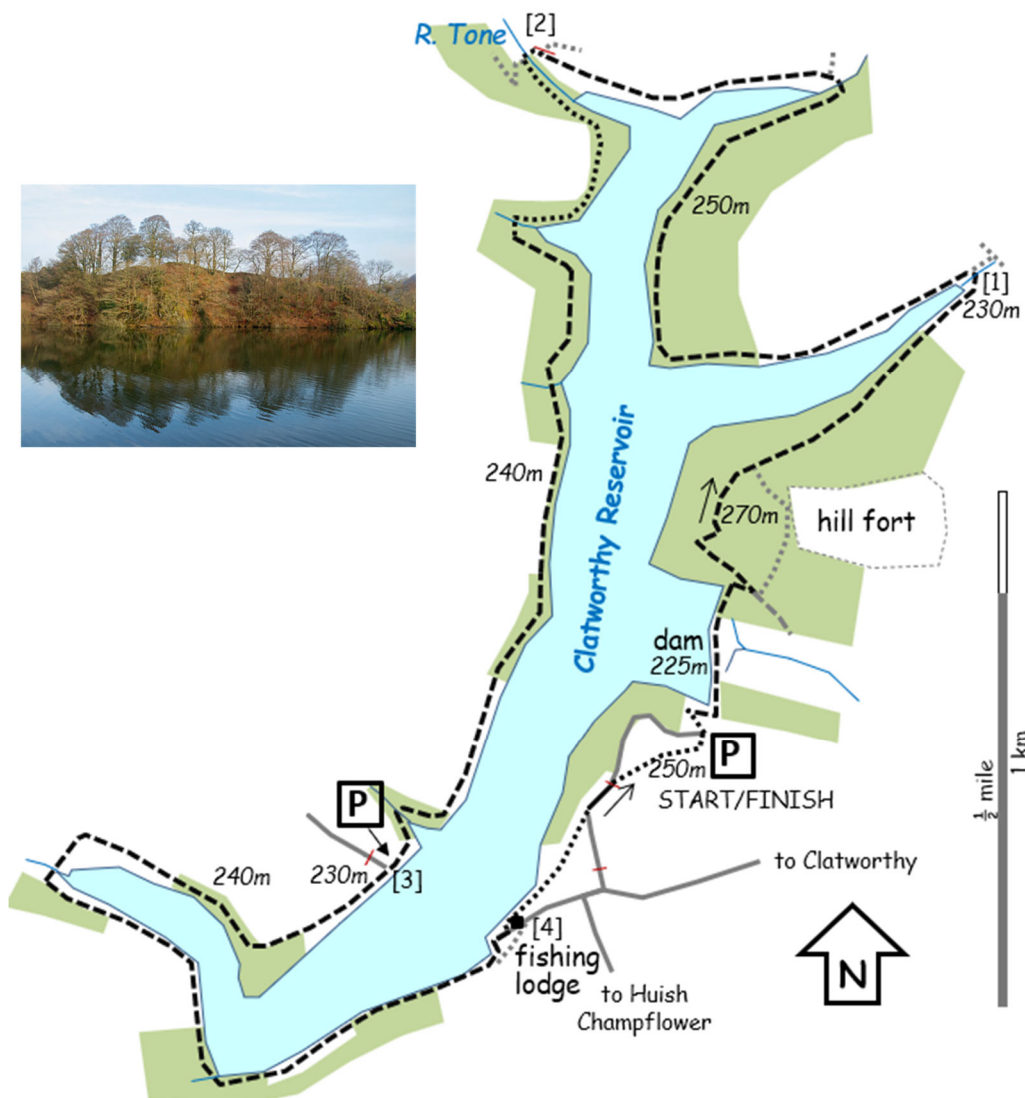
Map: OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

Refreshments: None on the route; pub at Raleigh's Cross, pubs and café in Wiveliscombe.

CLATWORTHY RESERVOIR is the smaller of the two man-made lakes that nestle in the southern slopes of the Brendon Hills. Constructed in the late 1950s by damming the River Tone to supply Taunton, it has a capacity of 5.4 million cubic metres of water, just over a quarter of that of nearby Wimbleball. Despite being outside the National Park, the lack of roads and amenities at the water's edge gives it a more remote and secluded feel than its neighbour. A circuit of the lake makes for a pleasant and *fairly* easy stroll; there are a few short steepish ascents. The circuit described here is on permissive paths owned by Wessex Water, well waymarked as the 'Clatworthy Round' with a distance sign every kilometre (the total is 8km). It is almost impossible to lose your way.

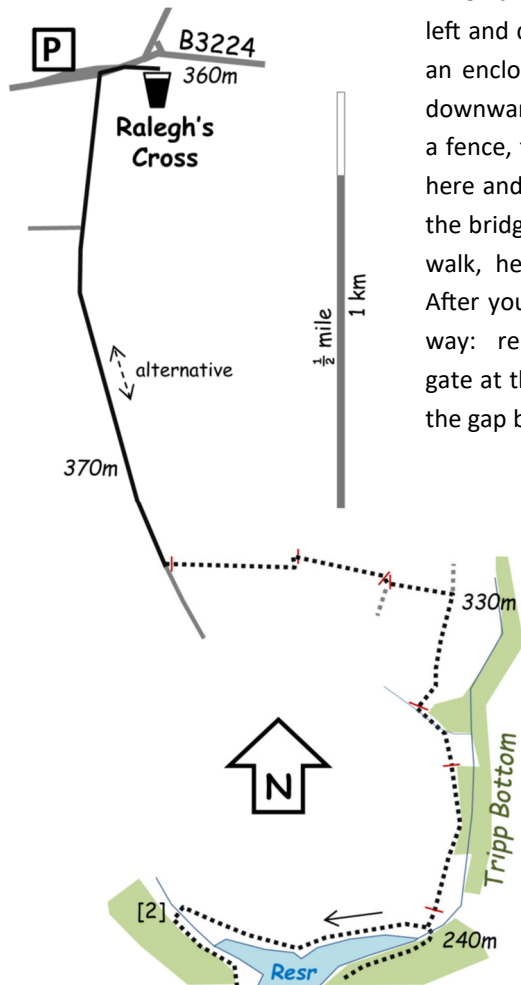
From the information board opposite the car park, follow the signposted footpath down the steps, to the right and then around to the left to cross the causeway. At the far side, follow the path briefly right, then turn sharp left uphill on a wide track and zigzag up above the lake. (An alternative here is to take the narrower path on the left just beyond: this heads through the woods to the edge of an Iron Age hill fort, with informative sign-board, before rejoining the main path). Soon after the two routes rejoin, the path drops gently downwards and continues along the north-eastern arm of the lake. Follow the path around the end (20mins, [1]) and back along the other side, then through a further wooded area to come to a wooden footbridge. Cross over and turn left; the path continues along the northern end of the lake, with views along its length. Soon after it bends right, turn left over a footbridge and cross the River Tone (50mins, [2]).

Keep left after the bridge and follow the path uninterrupted along the western side of the lake, with views across to the far bank and the dam. Opposite the fishing clubhouse you will come to a small parking area at the end of Syndercombe Lane (1hr15mins, [3]). Continue ahead here and follow the path first upwards to the end of a line of trees, then around the reservoir's 'tail'. The water is quite shallow here, and in long dry spells it can dry up completely. Continue to the fishing lodge; it has toilets when open but not refreshments (1hr40mins, [4]). Turn left and walk across its wooden terrace, then uphill on a grassy path. Rejoin the access road, turning left; after the gate, a short-cut across the grass to the right passes through a small memorial wood and returns to the car park.



Alternative longer walk from Raleigh's Cross (entire walk ● 8.5 miles, ascents and descents of 365 metres). With your back to the inn, turn left and walk along the road for a minute or so until you reach a farm road on the left, marked as a bridleway. Turn left here, then after 15 minutes turn left through a gate, marked as a bridleway, into a field. Walk along the right-hand edge. There are three gates at the end: go through the leftmost one and continue ahead along the field edge. At the end of the field go through a gap, turn right through a gate, then left through another gate (ignoring the track that continues ahead). Cross the field then go through a gap and turn right to walk next to a row of beech trees, above a valley.

When the trees run out, keep the gorse bushes on your left and descend to a gate. Head through it and follow an enclosed path, which also serves as a stream bed, downwards; this goes through another gate, alongside a fence, then comes to an open field. Bear slightly left here and descend to cross a tall ladder stile. Head for the bridge, but turn right just before it to join the main walk, heading along the northern edge of the lake. After you have completed the circuit, return the same way: remember to turn right uphill after the second gate at the end of the enclosed path, then left through the gap before the end of the line of trees.



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