



Walk A1. Witheridge, Black Dog and Washford Pyne.

- 9 miles, ascents and descents of 265 metres (moderate). 3 hours 15 minutes continuous walking, allow around 4½ hours. The shorter walk is 7 miles and 210 metres.

Terrain: Paths, tracks and fields, small streams to splash through, potentially muddy in places. Some road walking, on quiet lanes apart from a short stretch on the B3042.

Access: Start from the village square in Witheridge, SS 803 145, EX16 8AE. There is free parking in the square and at various points along the B3137 in the direction of Tiverton. Bus 155 runs roughly every two hours (not Sundays) between Barnstaple, South Molton, Witheridge, Tiverton and Exeter, stopping on the north side of the square.

Maps: The walk is split between OS Explorer 114 and 127.

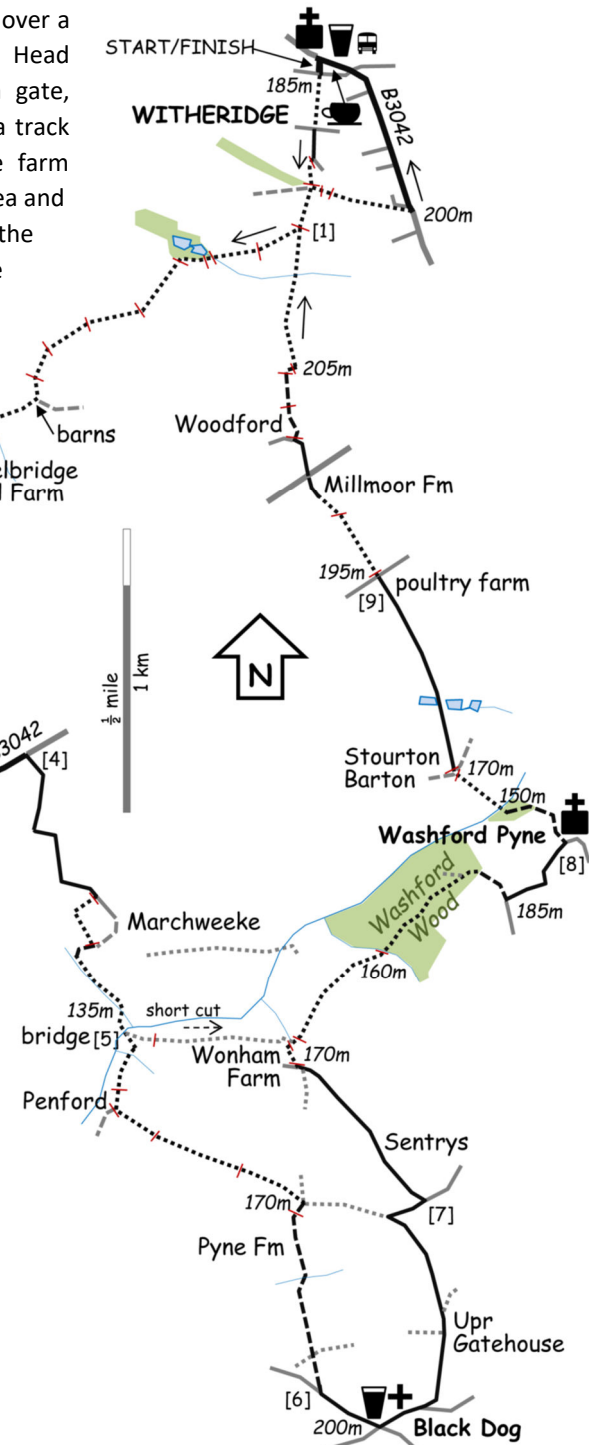
Refreshments: Inns in Witheridge, Thelbridge and Black Dog (check opening); tea room (Mon-Sat) and shop selling hot drinks in Witheridge.

MID-DEVON IS A HINTERLAND of gently rolling fields, quiet woods and attractive, homely villages, much less visited than the coast or the National Parks to the north and south. It is also less well-walked, partly because of the difficulty of making up circular routes on footpaths. Nevertheless it is a rewarding place to visit if you are looking for somewhere off the beaten track; you will find few other walkers apart from locals with dogs, and very few holidaymakers. This walk starts from the attractive and substantial village of Witheridge and follows paths, tracks and lanes over gentle hills, with plenty of views. The return, via Washford Pyne, follows part of the Two Moors Way, marked by an M over W symbol. It isn't Exmoor or Dartmoor, but it is a rewarding walk through varied, gently undulating countryside.

Walk away from the church to the post office shop on the far side of the square. To the left of the shop go down a narrow alley between buildings. This path widens out and comes to a residential road. Cross over into a cul-de-sac, and before it bends left go through a kissing gate on the right. Follow a line of telegraph poles, go through a gate, then cross the field ahead to come to a gate in the far boundary (7mins, [1]). In the next field, head diagonally right to another gate. From here head slightly right towards the trees; arrive at a footpath sign and a gate, which will bring you to two ponds. Go through the gates and continue along the left-hand field edge. Turn left through gates just before the end of the ponds, then head at about 45° to the right into the field. Go through a gate with a stile in the corner of the field, then walk along the left-hand edge of the next field. Over a stile and continue ahead, fractionally to the left. Come to a gate and stile in the corner of the field, then continue along the edge of the next field to go over another stile. The official path crosses the next field towards a farm in the distance, but it may be easier to walk clockwise around the edge. Pass a

barn, then soon after the next corner go over a stile and a small footbridge (25mins, [2]). Head left uphill towards a house, through a gate, then follow the fence on the left. Join a track and follow it anticlockwise around the farm area. Turn right after a horse exercise area and join the fenced-off path to the left of the field. Follow it through gates and beside a large barn. Go through a gate to join the driveway of a house and come to the main road (35mins, [3]).

Turn left here, and in 15 minutes arrive at the Thelbridge Cross Inn, turning left on the main road (a short detour to the right about a quarter of a mile earlier takes you to the church at Thelbridge). In another four minutes, turn right on the driveway to Marchweeke (55mins, [4]). This road twists and turns; as the farm comes into view, turn right through a gate on to a public footpath. Follow it around the left-hand edge of the field, then go



Witheridge

through a gate and turn right to rejoin the track. When the path opens out turn immediately left (if you come to a small stream you have gone too far). Keep above the valley until the path descends and crosses first the small stream, then a much larger one on a substantial footbridge (1hr15mins, [5]; the short-cut to Washford Pyne leaves here). Continue slightly to the right across a marshy area to a post with several footpath markers, turning right here to splash through a small stream. Go through a gate and head towards a farm on an enclosed footpath; ignore the path signposted to the right, bearing left still on the enclosed path to keep left of the farmhouse and head uphill. Go through a pedestrian gate and bear slightly right, keeping roughly parallel with the left-hand field boundary. In the middle of the far field boundary is a gate; go through, and head for the end of a line of trees to come to a signpost. Now turn right and go through a gate; this takes you on to a path between trees. Pass Pyne Farm and a small pond, then in ten minutes come to a road (1hr40mins, [6]). Turn left here, and left again at the crossroads in front of the Black Dog inn.

Two minutes later, fork left towards Washford Pyne at a signposted road junction. In a little under ten minutes, follow the road around a sharp right-hand bend; soon afterwards, turn left on a side-road at a green gravel box (1hr55mins, [7]). Pass various farm buildings and silos on your right. Immediately before Wonham Farm, turn right on a signposted bridleway through a field gate. Keep right around the field boundary, right at a gate (the short-cut referred to above comes in here), and straight on at a field gate following the Two Moors Way. Keep the wire fence on your right, until it turns right; cut across to the far corner here to descend to a stream, cross it on a footbridge, and enter a wood. Follow the path right and upwards through the wood. Soon after it comes into the open, meet a road and turn left. This brings you into Washford Pyne; just before the church, turn left on a track (2hr25mins, [8]).

Drop down through a small wood and cross a stream. Head up the other side of the valley, aiming for the middle of the hedge where there is a gap with some steps. At the next gate head left to join a farm track, and follow it around slightly to the right; go through a gate to join a surfaced drive, keeping to the right of the sheds on this straight access road. Pass some ponds and then meet a road at a poultry farm (2hr45mins, [9]). Cross over and continue ahead through a gate into a field. Head diagonally left, towards the house in front of you; go through the next gate, then head left of the house to join a drive leading to a road. Cross over and continue on another farm drive. As you approach the farm (Woodford) go right through a gate and continue along a rough track alongside the field. This takes you through gateways then bends right into a field; turn left alongside the field edge. Arriving at a post, head right and downhill to another post beneath some trees about two-thirds of the way along the field-edge. Cross the footbridge and continue directly ahead. Go through a pedestrian gate to briefly rejoin your outward route (3hr5mins, [1]). Head to the right-hand corner of the field, turning right through the gate, then through a second gate to join a fenced-off path. This brings you to some houses on the edge of Witheridge. Turn left on the main road and walk back to the village centre. The tea room is at the art shop, tucked away down West Street on the left just before the square, and the pub is almost opposite the square.

Shorter walk: Witheridge, Thelbridge and Washford Pyne (● 7 miles, ascents and descents of 210 metres). At the 1hr15min point ([5]) continue ahead to the fenced-off corner of a small wood. Head uphill then bear left to walk beside the gorse bushes. At the top go through a gate and continue on a level grass path above the valley. Keep the field boundary on your right. At the end of the field turn left through a gate with an M over W Two Moors Way sign to rejoin the main route just after Wonham Farm.

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