



## Walk 15. Around Challacombe.

- 8.2 miles, 3 hours 20 minutes. Ascents and descents of 305 metres.

**Terrain:** Paths, tracks and open moorland; the moor is tussocky and uneven, and it can be boggy in winter and after heavy rain. A compass is useful particularly in poor visibility. The height gain is only moderate, but the terrain can be tiring hence the blue classification.

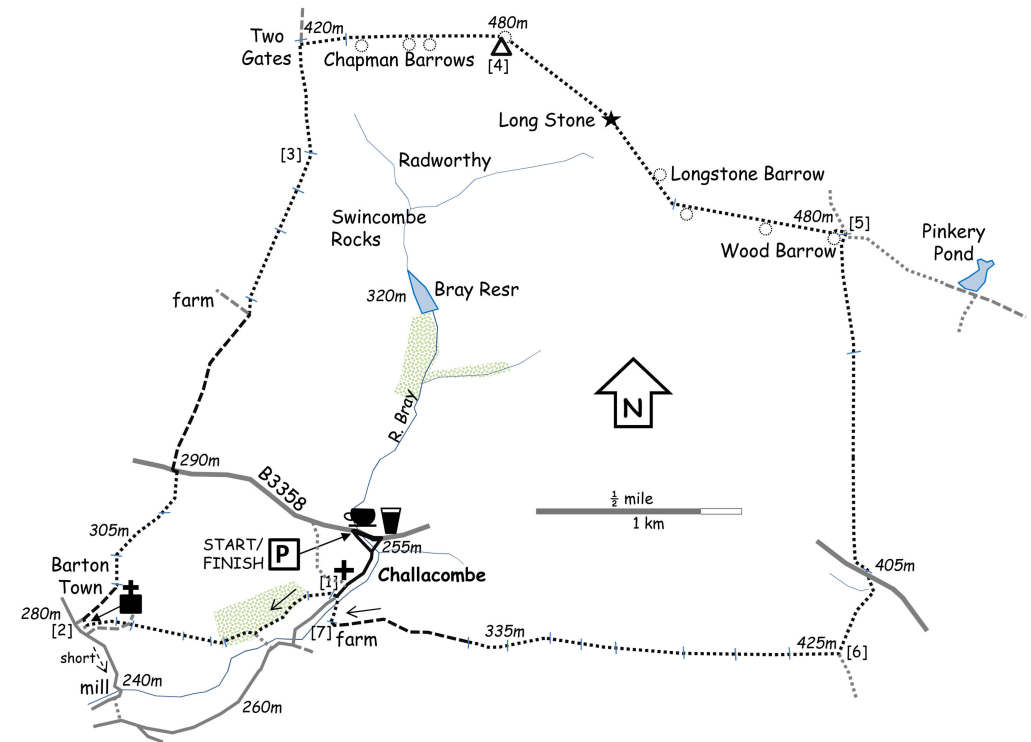
**Access:** By car, park in Challacombe in the layby opposite the post office/shop/tea garden (not in the Black Venus car park) (SS 693 410, EX31 4TT). No bus service.

**Map:** OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

**Refreshments:** Pub and tea garden at Challacombe.

CHALLACOMBE IS AN ATTRACTIVE, UNDEVELOPED and somewhat fragmented small village in a quiet corner of western Exmoor. Unfortunately it is difficult to make up very many circular walks from the village without using the B3358, which can be quite fast and busy away from the village. Both the main walk and the short walk described avoid the main road, although the short walk includes narrow lanes. The main walk starts by heading to Challacombe's 'detached' church in Barton Town, then continues north on to the open moor above Bray Reservoir and Radworthy, an abandoned medieval village. The moors are studded with Bronze Age burial mounds (c. 3-4,000 years old) along with Exmoor's tallest standing stone, thought to date from the same era. The return route heads almost to Pinkery Pond (see walk 18) then along the Devon/Somerset boundary, before heading back to Challacombe on the high ground of South Regis Common.

From the post office walk west downhill, go over a bridge then turn left on a road alongside a stream, the River Bray. Pass a ford and then on the right a small chapel; ignore the first footpath to the right, then just before a bridge turn right initially on a driveway to take a public footpath towards Challacombe church (7mins, [1]). Go through first a field gate then a pedestrian gate. Where the path emerges into a field, continue straight ahead; when a path crosses, turn right as signposted towards the church, heading upwards between beech trees. Continue in the same direction across fields; after cresting a slight hill you will see the church. Cross over a lane, cross fields and enter the churchyard. Heading around the front of the church (25mins, [2]), turn right, go through a gate and turn right again to join a farm track. Go through a field gate and continue on the track. At the next gate turn left on to a signposted bridleway. In the next field head slightly to the right to join an old grassy track, between two low banks. Cross into another field and arrive at a road.



Opposite and slightly to the left, join a farm lane signposted as a bridleway to Two Gates. Pass a farm on your left, then continue straight ahead at the next three gates, keeping the field boundary on your left. At the fourth you come onto the open moor (1hr10mins, [3]). This is access land; it is possible to explore around Radworthy, to Swincombe Rocks and down to Bray (or Challacombe) Reservoir (the track from here back to Challacombe is private). To continue the walk, as you enter the moor bear very slightly left (the bearing is 353°) to stay on the high ground, joining a track that comes to a gate; this is 'Two Gates'. Don't go through the gate, but turn right and follow the line of the bank. In three minutes or so cross another bank on a ladder stile, then pass a series of barrows (earth mounds). On the last of these, about ten minutes from the stile, is a trig point at 480 metres (1hr35mins, [4]). From here bear away from the bank (compass bearing 128°), coming in ten minutes or under to the Long Stone, an isolated slate standing stone about half as tall again as a person (if you miss the Long Stone, bear slightly left then turn right when you come to the field boundary to arrive at the gate and stile described below). The going may be slow here due to the tussocky and possibly boggy terrain. Now alter your course fractionally to the right (145°), arriving in about five minutes at Longstone Barrow. A couple of minutes beyond on the same bearing, come to a field gate with a ladder stile. Go through, then head parallel with the

bank. Pass more mounds and come to a large one (Wood Barrow) a little over ten minutes from the gate. Walk to its far side then turn right to go through a gate signposted to the B3358 (2hr10mins, [5]); heading left here brings you in a few minutes to Pinkery Pond). Keep close to the right-hand field edge. The road is reached in a mile of gentle downhill walking; as you approach it, head slightly to the left past some pens to come to the gate.

Cross the main road, and go through two gates to take the path towards Moles Chamber (see walk 18). In around five minutes arrive at a signposted junction, where the right-hand field boundary runs out (2hr40mins, [6]); turn right towards Challacombe, heading along a line of beech trees. This path continues almost due west for nearly a mile, across moorland and through fields; continuing in the same general direction, join a more defined track and follow it to a farm. Turn right here through a gate on to a bridleway, which descends to the left (3hr10mins, [7]). Cross a narrow stone bridge and turn right on a road to rejoin your outward route. Go over another bridge at a ford, then turn left at the main road to return to the post office and layby.

**Stroll around Challacombe** (● 2.6 miles, ascents and descents of 90 metres). Follow the main walk as far as the church ([2]). Leave the churchyard through the main gate and turn left on the road. Pass the former Challacombe Mill and go over a bridge. Shortly after, turn left on a signposted footpath, keeping the field edge to your left. Cross a stile and turn left on to a lane. This now returns to Challacombe via the old school house, chapel, and ford: go over the bridge next to the ford and turn left on the main road to return to the start.



*The Long Stone*

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