



## Walk 16. Brayford, Whitefield Down and High Bray.

- 11.9 miles, ascents and descents of 610 metres. 4 hours 40 minutes constant walking, allow 6-6½ hours.

Terrain: Roads, tracks and fields, parts uneven and muddy.

Access: By car, park in Brayford on the through road close to the Methodist church or immediately east of the bridge where you are not inconveniencing other traffic (SS 687 347, EX32 7QH). There is also usually space for two or three cars on the road between Kinsford Gate and Sloley Stone, at the northernmost corner of the walk (SS 726 376, [3] on the plan), and a small parking area where the Tarka Trail leaves the road on the southern loop of the walk (SS 701 345, between points [5] and [6]). There is one bus to Brayford each way from South Molton on Fridays; get off at the Brayfordhill stop and walk into Brayford.

Map: OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

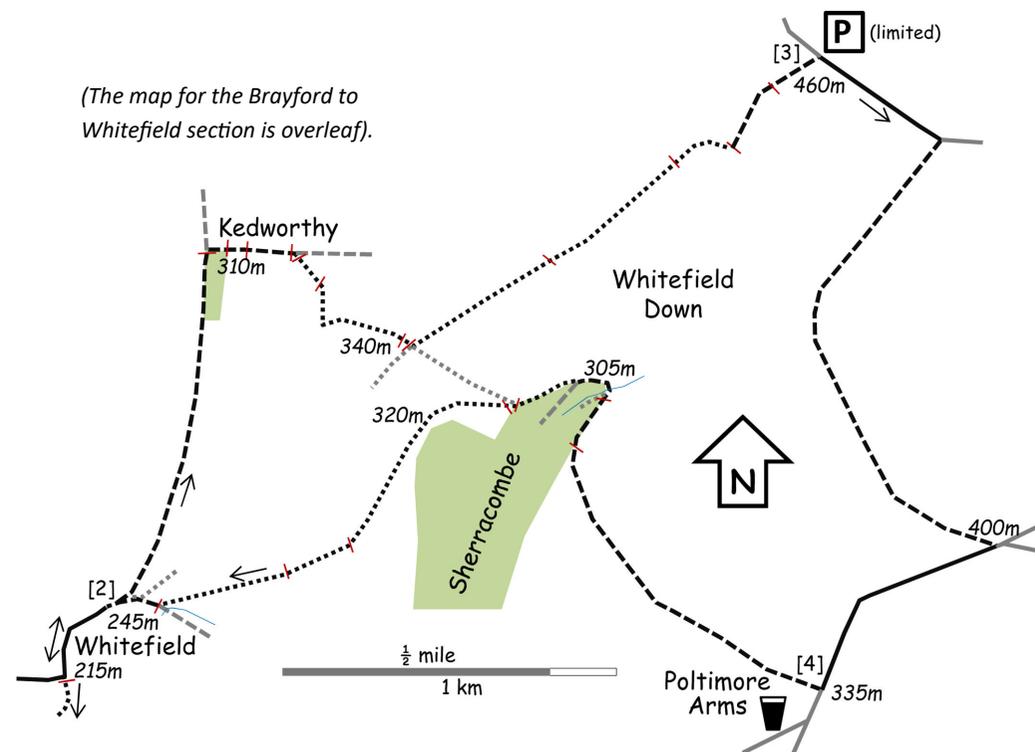
Refreshments: The Poltimore Arms is just off the route; nothing in Brayford.

THE SOUTH-WESTERN EDGE OF EXMOOR ATTRACTS RELATIVELY FEW WALKERS, perhaps because of the difficulty of finding circular off-road routes. This walk combines rolling country and a secluded river valley with the high downs of southern Exmoor. It reaches a height of 460 metres, providing panoramic views across North Devon from Hartland Point to Dartmoor. The walk starts in the attractive village of Brayford before heading up on to Whitefield Down, returning south on the Tarka Trail through woods alongside a stream, sometimes known as the Little Owl River. The final section is along a stony track to the hamlet of High Bray, then across fields back to Brayford. The walk easily divides into two shorter loops.

From the church in Brayford, go over the River Bray bridge and turn left towards Lydcott (the short alternative walk keeps right). Walk to the top of the hill and come to a crossroads (15mins, [1]); turn right towards Whitefield and Kedworthy. Follow the road down into a valley, across a small bridge, and steeply up the other side. The road bends sharply left and heads through the Whitefield farms, becoming a concrete lane. Go over a cattle grid (37mins, [2]) and take the left fork towards Kedworthy. In a little under 20 minutes go through a gate at Kedworthy Farm. Turn right to go through the farmyard (not past the front of the house). Leaving the farmyard head uphill on the track, go through a gate with a brick pillar, then immediately through another gate diagonally opposite to enter a field. On a clear day Dartmoor will be visible to the right. Bear slightly right across the field and go over a stile. Turn right and follow the field edge along two sides until it comes to a gate. Go through this and the next gate, then turn left alongside the field boundary. The path goes through several gates before joining a vehicle track, eventually arriving at a road (1hr20mins, [3]).

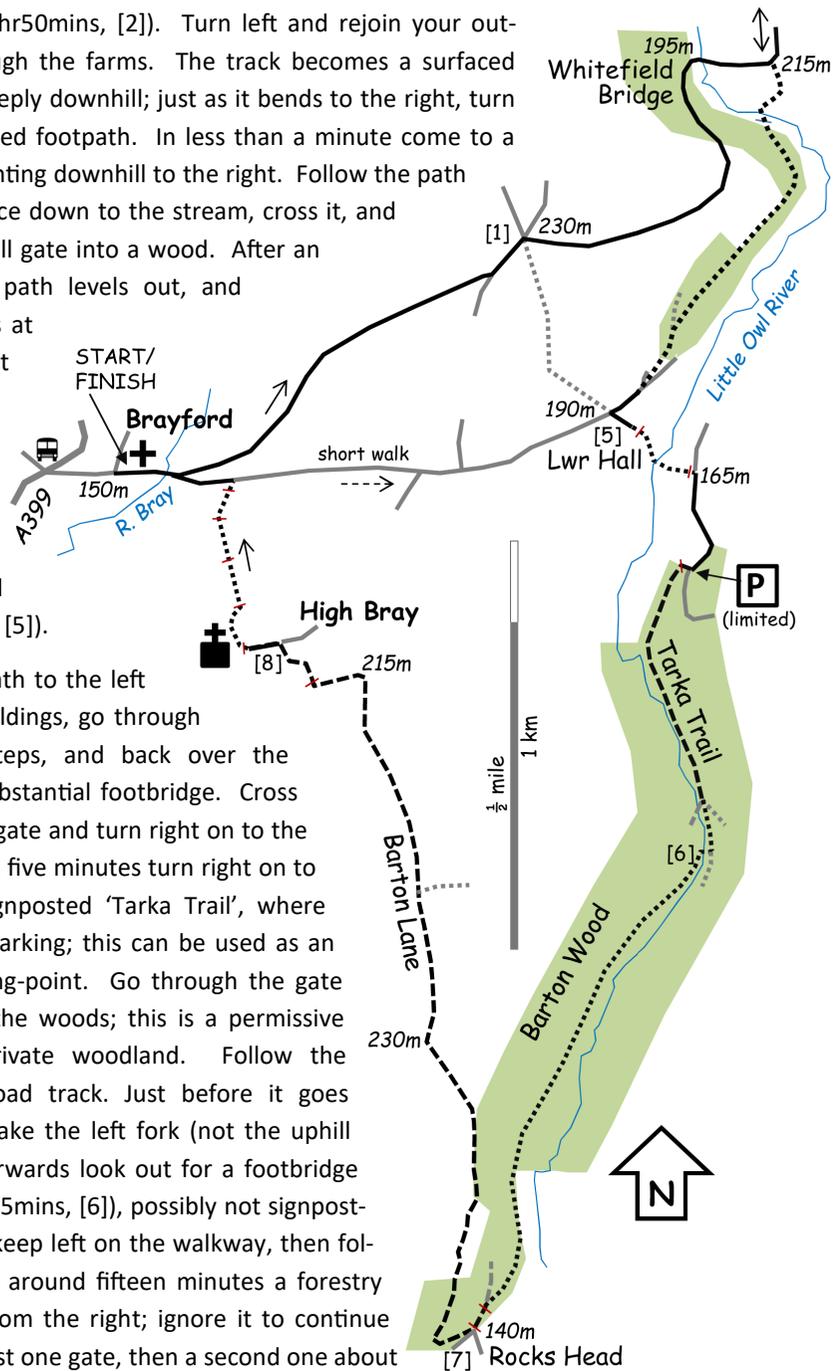
Turn right on the road: in good visibility you will have far-reaching views across North Devon, from Dartmoor to the left around to Hartland Point and in the far distance Lundy. At the second line of trees, where the road bends left, turn right on a roughly-surfaced lane. This heads gradually downhill; in about 25 minutes come to a road at a crossroads, and turn right. There are more views across lush North Devon farmland to Dartmoor on the left. The road soon bends left; three or four minutes later, turn right on a track towards Whitefield and Kedworthy (2hr5mins, [4]). If you come to a road junction you have gone too far; the Poltimore Arms, quirky and welcoming, is on the right.

The track starts off level, then goes through a gate and drops towards a stream; after another gate follow the path left around the end of the valley, keeping right and uphill at a fork. Go through a field gate, then turn immediately left through a kissing gate towards Whitefield. Clip the edge of the trees ahead of you, then gradually head diagonally across the field. In about seven or eight minutes come to another kissing gate in its right-hand boundary. Your route across the next field is marked by a footpath sign, but head slightly to the left of the direction indicated to go over a slight crest and come to another gate with a signpost. Now go straight ahead, aiming for a small concrete structure like a miniature pillbox. You will gradually converge with a small stream that cuts across the field. Meet a track at the end of the field, bearing right to go through a gate or over a stile. Soon arrive at a T-junction with a



concrete track (2hr50mins, [2]). Turn left and rejoin your outward route through the farms. The track becomes a surfaced road, heading steeply downhill; just as it bends to the right, turn left on a signposted footpath. In less than a minute come to a footpath sign pointing downhill to the right. Follow the path alongside the fence down to the stream, cross it, and go through a small gate into a wood. After an initial climb the path levels out, and eventually arrives at a road. Turn right on the road, then left down the lane (signposted as the Tarka Trail) to Lower Hall Farm (3hr15mins, [5]).

Follow the footpath to the left of some farm buildings, go through a gate, down steps, and back over the stream on the substantial footbridge. Cross a field to an iron gate and turn right on to the road. In less than five minutes turn right on to a broad track signposted 'Tarka Trail', where there is limited parking; this can be used as an alternative starting-point. Go through the gate at the end into the woods; this is a permissive path through private woodland. Follow the stream on a broad track. Just before it goes through a ford, take the left fork (not the uphill path). Soon afterwards look out for a footbridge on the right (3hr35mins, [6]), possibly not signposted. Cross it and keep left on the walkway, then follow the path. In around fifteen minutes a forestry track comes in from the right; ignore it to continue ahead through first one gate, then a second one about a minute later. After the second gate turn immediately right on to a rough track, just before the road at Rocks Head (4hrs, [7]).



Follow this track all the way to High Bray. Initially it is steep, on possibly slippery bedrock. Ignore a permissive path to the right; opposite there are views across to quarries above the A399. After sharp left and right bends, turn left in front of a row of houses (4hr25mins, [8]). Enter the churchyard, turn right and go through a gate into a field. Keep to the right, cross into a second and a third field, go over a footbridge and down steps, and come to the road. Turn left, go over the bridge, and arrive back in Brayford.

**Northern loop: Brayford and Whitefield Down** (● 9.2 miles, ascents and descents of 440 metres). Follow the main walk as far as the turn-off to Lower Hall Farm ([5]), then continue ahead along the road back to Brayford. Alternatively a shorter loop (● 6 miles, ascents and descents 250 metres) can be done by starting from Whitefield Down or the Poltimore Arms and missing out the descent into Brayford: at point [2] turn right on the concrete lane to Kedworthy.

**Southern loop: Brayford and High Bray** (● 4.3 miles, ascents and descents of 225 metres). Start as for the main walk but keep right after the bridge, following the road in the direction of Simonsbath. Pass a nursery school on the left, then in ten minutes or so turn right on the lane to Lower Hall Farm, rejoining the main walk at the 3hr15-minute point ([5]).



Whitefield Down

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