



## Walk 16A. Wistlandpound Reservoir and Bratton Fleming.

- 8 miles, 3 hours 5 minutes. Ascents and descents of 365 metres.

Terrain: Paths, tracks and roads; a few marshy areas. Some short steep climbs and descents.

Access: Start from the small parking area at the southern end of the reservoir, at SS 639 416. Currently parking close to the road is free, while there is a charge to park next to the reservoir. Alternatively, start from Bratton Fleming using bus 310 between Lynton and Barnstaple.

Map: OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

Refreshments: Shop selling snacks and ice-cream in Bratton Fleming, otherwise there is a pub at Blackmoor Gate, a mile and a half from the start.

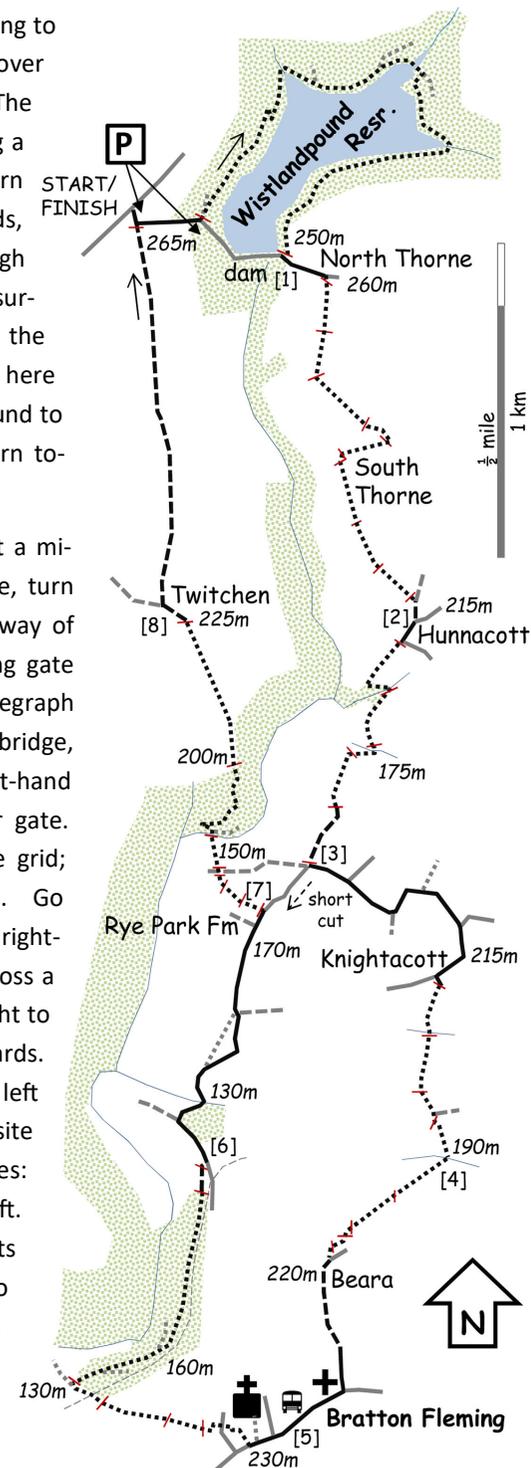
WISTLANDPOUND RESERVOIR WAS COMPLETED IN 1956 by damming an unnamed tributary of the River Yeo. It is secluded, gently scenic, and accessible – of all the bodies of water in the Exmoor area, it is the only one that is encircled by a wheelchair-friendly path. This walk starts with a circuit of the reservoir, then uses paths across fields to head south to Bratton Fleming, returning through woods and along lanes; the walk is highly varied, quiet, and intermittently scenic.

From the car park, follow the road down to the lower, lakeside parking area. Turn left through a pedestrian gate, and take the right fork to walk around the reservoir on a broad, well-made path; keep to the inner path. Arriving back at the dam (30mins, [1]), turn left, and follow the drive past a bungalow and a barn, but not as far as the farmhouse. Turn right through a metal gate with a small footpath sign. Just east of here, on private land, is abandoned medieval North Thorne village. Head down to the far right-hand corner of the field where there is a pond; go through the gate and cross to the far side of the field, to another field gate. Go through and head diagonally left to the corner of the field, and go through a gate. Follow the path between hedges to an ivy-clad stone barn. Turn right just before it, go through a gate and make for a white-painted house. A stile leads into its garden, and a second stile takes you out again, over a small plank bridge. Head for the far right-hand corner of the field, through a gate, along the right edge of the field, then through another gate in front of a corrugated barn. Bear right and downhill here, then turn right on to a lane (50mins, [2]).

When the lane bends left, continue ahead on a signposted footpath into a field. Head for a ridge, then aim for the rightmost of several individual tall trees. Just beyond it turn sharply

left at a footpath post to join a path descending to a stream. Cross over on the stone slab, go over the stile and turn right on the footpath. The path soon leaves the stream and heads along a tree-lined bank. Go through a gate and turn right over a small footbridge. Head upwards, bear left and go through a field gate. Through another gate, then bear left to join an unsurfaced lane. Go through a gate to come to the corner of a road (1hr5mins, [3]); turn left here (right for the short-cut). Follow the road around to the right, at the T-junction taking a right turn towards Knightacott.

Keep right at Higher Knightacott, then about a minute later, before coming to a stone cottage, turn left on a signposted footpath into the driveway of the Old Stables. Turn right through a kissing gate into a field. Stay just to the left of the telegraph poles; descend to a stream, cross it on a footbridge, and go through a gate. Head to the far right-hand corner of the field and go through another gate. Now bear diagonally left. Come to a cattle grid; keep right in front of it on a sunken path. Go through a gate on the left, then follow the right-hand side of the field. Descend steps and cross a stream (1hr30mins, [4]), then bear slightly right to join an obvious path heading diagonally upwards. Go over a pair of stiles, and head diagonally left for a point about halfway along the opposite field edge. Here you will find two more stiles: go over them, and through the gate on the left. Pass across the back of a large house and its garden, then through a pedestrian gate to turn right on its driveway. This lane becomes a surfaced road and brings you into Bratton Fleming. Turn right at a T-junction to walk into the centre of the village (1hr45mins, [5]).



Unfortunately the village pub is no more, but there is a shop on the left by the village green, selling drinks, snacks and ice-cream. (If you are starting the walk from Bratton Fleming, head downhill from the bus stop). Ignore the road on the right and the path to the church, but just beyond turn right on a footpath between houses. Go through an arch on the left, across the road, through another arch, then left and next right to come to a gate that leads down steps into a field. Cross the field to a solitary tree, go through the gate and continue straight ahead. Go through a pedestrian gate on to a sunken path. Follow it downhill, then at a junction turn right through a gate. The path runs on a ledge through woods, high above a stream on the left. Keep left at the first fork, and right at the second fork. Gradually converge with a stone bank on the right; this is the line of the former Lynton and Barnstaple Railway, also encountered in Walk 15A. Go through one gate then another, arriving at a road (2hr10mins, [6]).

Turn left here to follow the road for a little over half a mile. In about ten minutes, after a steep climb, note a ruined stone barn on your left, then a little later the entrance to Rye Park Farm. Shortly after (2hr25mins, [7]) turn left through a gate on a signed footpath, head across the field, through a gate, then just to the right of a small stone house. Go through gates to cross a track, then head across the field to a gate into woods. Cross a stream, turn left, then follow the path around and to the right as indicated on a marker post. The path rises steeply. It can be indistinct at times; pass to the left of a small hollow, then at a small clearing your onward route is to the right. Go over a stile by a line of beech trees into a field. Continue upwards, then bear slightly left towards a roof with a chimney. Go through the gate by the house and turn left; this is Twitchen (2hr45mins, [8]). Follow the track right in front of an open-fronted barn. In twenty minutes or so this will bring you to a gate leading into the parking area back at Wistlandpound.

**Shorter walks.** An easy way to shorten the walk is to turn right (on the surfaced road) rather than left at the 1hr5min point ([3]), then in two or three minutes take the footpath through the gate on the right, rejoining the main walk at the 2hr25min point ([7]) (● 4.8 miles, ascents and descents of 185 metres). Starting from Bratton Fleming, the same short-cut in reverse gives a walk of 3.5 miles (● ascents and descents of 185 metres). Alternatively, the circuit of Wistlandpound makes a pleasant stroll of 1.6 miles from the lower car park.



*Wistlandpound*