



Walk 17A. Molland Common.

- 7.7 miles, ascents and descents of 350 metres. 3 hours constant walking, allow 4-4½ hours.

Terrain: Moorland, fields, paths and lanes. There are some boggy sections and a ford to cross (avoidable) that make this walk inadvisable after prolonged rain. ! Open moorland: take a compass or a reliable GPS, and be prepared to pick your way across potentially marshy ground.

Access: Start at the church in Molland, where there is a small car park (SS 808 284, EX36 3NG).

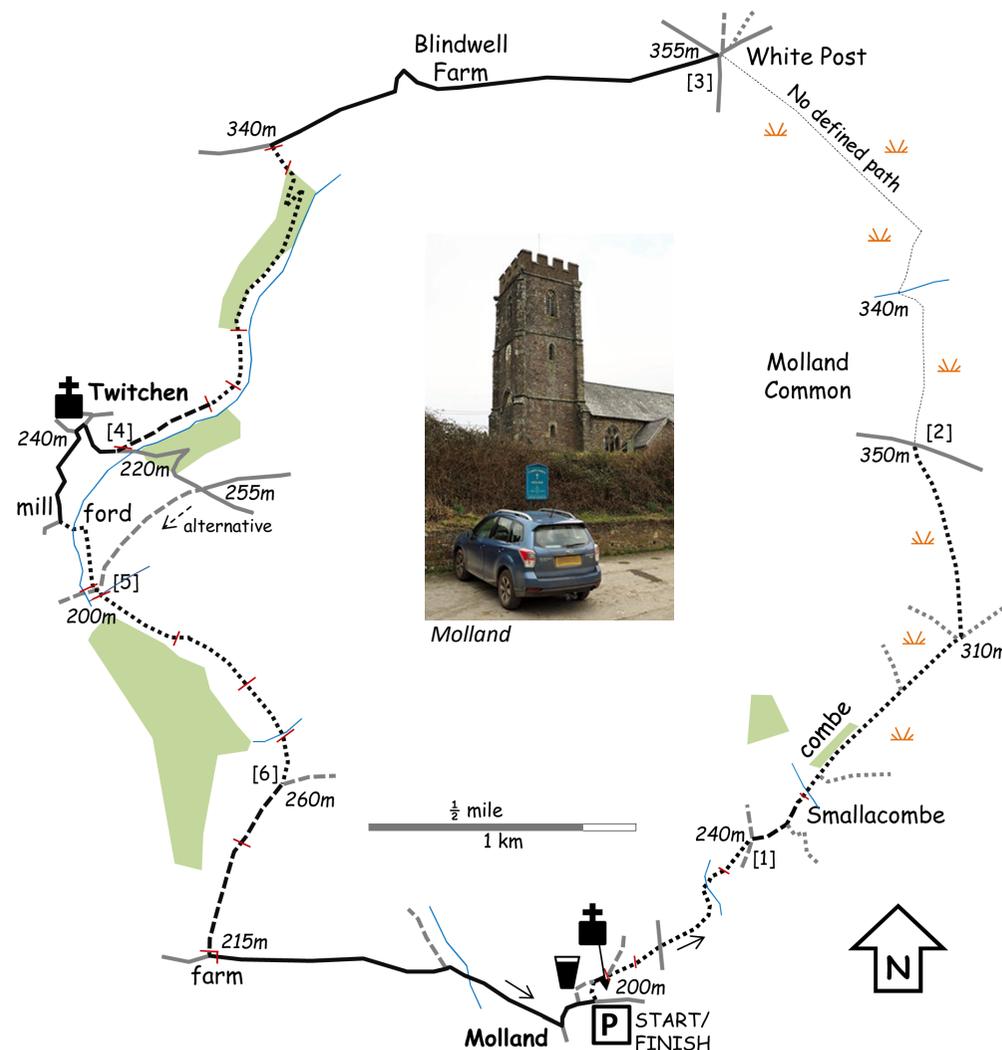
Map: Most of the route is on OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor; the south-western corner is on 127 South Molton & Chulmleigh.

Refreshments: Pub in Molland, closed mid-afternoon, or drive to Dulverton or South Molton for more choice.

The Molland area is much less of a magnet for walkers than the high ground further to the north, and here you are more likely to encounter farmers going about their business or perhaps one or two local dog owners than anyone who is 'doing a walk'. This second walk in the area heads up on to the open moors of Molland Common, with distant views particularly to the south, then follows a stream valley to the tiny village of Twitchen and its mill. Twitchen is aptly-named for a place so far off the beaten track; it means a fork or side-turning. Quiet paths and lanes take you back to Molland, with a view over the village just as you approach it.

Start at Molland church, worth exploring first if you have time (see walk 17). Cross the churchyard, leaving it through the small gate on its northern side, and turn right on the farm track. Follow the track as it starts to turn left into the farm, then turn right into a field on a signposted footpath, ignoring the obvious track. Cross the field diagonally to a gate. Cross the next field heading slightly left, aiming for a gap in the hedge. Go through the gate, across a road and into the field beyond. Head to the right-hand side of a group of trees, then follow a path down to a stream. Ignore a path coming in from the right, then look for a signposted but otherwise hidden path to the right, which drops down some steps and crosses the stream. On the other side go steeply uphill heading diagonally left to the corner of the fence, then through (or around) a gate on the left. Facing through the gate, head slightly right to come to an initially hidden gate in the far corner of the field; this brings you to a farm lane at a junction (15mins, [1]). Cross the lane and head towards Smallacombe, as signposted. Go straight ahead, through a gate signposted 'Anstey Gate 1¼', and immediately cross a stream on to open moorland. Take the left-hand fork above the side of Smallacombe Combe. Head up on to the open moor, keep just left of a clump of gorse, and come to three small thorn trees. Continue ahead on a rough path, on a compass bearing of about 040°.

Ignore the first path to the left. Three minutes or so later there is a vague path junction; now head left, on a rough bearing of 350°. You should be aiming well to the left of a solitary thorn tree, and slightly left of two gorse bushes. Just beyond them the path may become less distinct. When you arrive at a narrow road, look for a pull-in just big enough for a car (50mins, [2]). Your way ahead continues on the other side of the road and follows a faint track heading north. This takes you into a small valley, through the left-hand end of a group of thorn trees, and then into another valley. The second valley has a marshy stream in its bottom; you may need to walk a little way to the left to cross. A stick or walking pole is useful here to probe for firm ground. Continue northwards up the other side, then veer right on a distinct path. Don't drop too far into the shallow, wet valley on your right, the aptly-named Soakey Moor; bear gradually left (to no more than 315°), and look for a road junction approximately



half a mile away, where two tree hedges come to a corner. This is your next waypoint: there is no obvious path, and you will have to cross some boggy ground.

The junction (White Post) is equipped with a convenient seat looking back over the moor (1hr15mins, [3]). Cross the road and a cattle grid, turning left on a narrow lane signposted to Twitchen. In about twelve minutes pass Blindwell Farm, and ten minutes further on turn left over a broad ladder stile on a footpath to Twitchen. Head downwards and through a field gate into a narrow wooded area. Go down steps and follow a path on a slight ledge, confirmed by blobs of yellow paint. Bear left at a large multistemmed tree, then left at a signpost. A little further on turn right at a signpost to walk above a stream. The path drops towards the stream and in a while becomes a grassy lane. Go through three gates, then after a fourth come to a road (2hrs, [4]). Turn right here to head up to the little village of Twitchen. Turn left at the junction. To make a short detour to the church—a good place for a break—keep right*. To continue the walk turn left again to walk down to the mill; note the leat to the right. Take a bridleway on the left just before the mill. Soon cross a wide ford, which can be fairly deep. Turn right into an area of grass. Continue on a rough path between clumps of gorse; when you come to a gate go through it, turn left, then go through another gate into a field (2hr10mins, [5]).

Head uphill across the field, keeping a mainly coniferous wood to your right. At the top go through a gate, turn left along the field edge, splash through a small stream, and bear right on a path alongside a row of beech trees. Keep the field edge to your left. At the top go through a gate and cross the next field, heading for the hedge running up the hill in front of you. Cross a small stream, through a gate, then head uphill with the hedge on your left. At the end of the field is a track (2hr30mins, [6]); turn right here, and in a few minutes continue ahead through a gate. A second gate brings you to a road; turn left, in front of a farm building. Follow the road for ten minutes or so to come to Molland. Walk through the village, then at a junction turn left on the Hawkridge and Withypool road, which will bring you back to the London Inn and the church.

* **To avoid the ford** return to the 2-hour point ([4]), continue downhill on the road, back uphill, and around a hairpin bend. At a junction, take the track on the right signposted 'unfit for motors'. Turn left at the end and go through the gate, rejoining the main walk at the 2hr10min point ([5]).