



Walk 21. Withypool, Landacre Bridge and Porchester's Post.

- 7.8 miles, 3 hours 20 minutes. Ascents and descents of 330 metres.

Terrain: Long stretches of open moorland and boggy terrain, and a few paths and tracks. The main walk and shorter alternative are not suitable when the ground is badly waterlogged or visibility is poor. Take a compass or GPS, and be prepared to spend time finding your way on the open moor. Both walks involve longish stretches of tussocky, boggy moor, which can be tiring and require a good sense of direction.

Access: By car, park in the small car park in Withypool (SS 845 354, TA24 7RA). Alternatively park just west of Landacre Bridge (SS 815 361) and join the walk from there. No bus service.

Map: OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

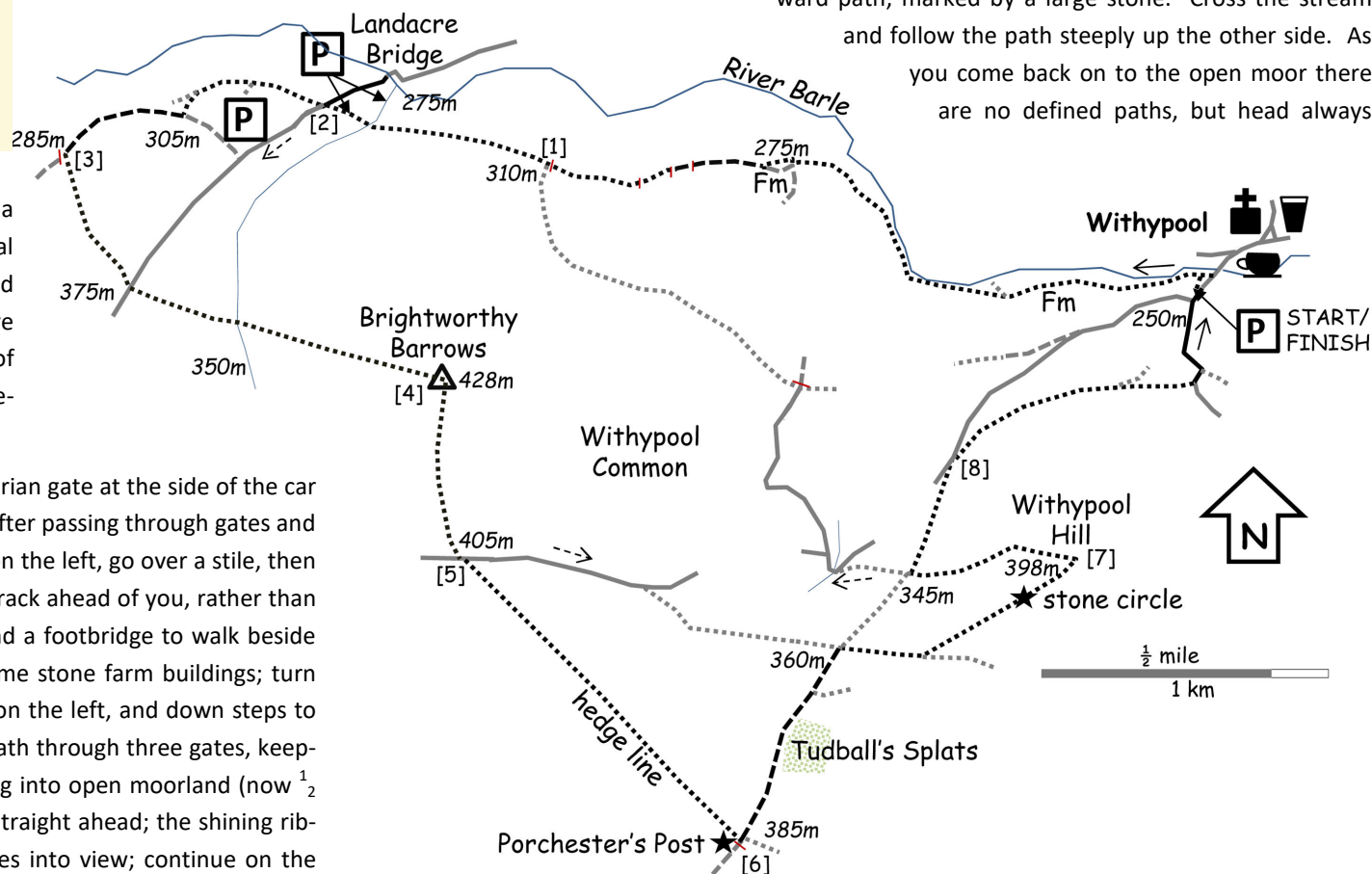
Refreshments: Pub and seasonal tea room in Withypool.

WITHYPOOL IS AN ATTRACTIVE VILLAGE ON THE RIVER BARLE, with a six-arched nineteenth-century bridge, post office shop, seasonal café, pub and church. This walk explores the Barle valley and the high ground to the west of Withypool. Beyond Landacre Bridge (pronounced 'Lanacre' and sometimes so-spelt), much of the walk is on open moorland, contrasting tussocky and sometimes boggy moor with panoramic views from the hilltops.

Start at the small car park in Withypool. Go through the pedestrian gate at the side of the car park, walk towards the river, and turn left to stroll upstream. After passing through gates and over a stile the path runs beside a meadow. Pass a large barn on the left, go over a stile, then over a second stile to the left; go through a gate and take the track ahead of you, rather than the overgrown grassy path to the right. Cross another stile and a footbridge to walk beside the river. Go through a gate (or over a stile) and come to some stone farm buildings; turn right over the stile, keep left along the field edge, over a stile on the left, and down steps to turn right on a sunken path ('Landacre Bridge 1'). Follow the path through three gates, keeping the field edge to your right. Arrive at a fourth gate opening into open moorland (now $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to the bridge), go through it (40mins, [1]), and continue straight ahead; the shining ribbon of the Barle is ahead of you. Landacre Bridge soon comes into view; continue on the

path, splash through a shallow stream, and arrive at the first of two parking areas (50mins, [2]). Turn right to visit the early 17th century bridge, something of a honeypot for visitors.

Returning to the parking area, turn right opposite the 'Withypool 2' sign, following a grassy path up on to the open moor. As the gradient levels out, follow the path gently around to the left, keeping high above the river. Bear left where it forks, and come to the head of a wide reedy gully. Pass the gully then turn right on to a stony track heading slightly downhill. This bears left away from the river, coming to a pair of field gates (1hr10mins, [3]). Turn left before the gates to follow a poorly-defined path steeply uphill parallel with the hedge: you will have to wade through bracken and reeds, picking your steps carefully. The path becomes less steep; continue parallel with the hedge until you arrive at a road next to a cattle grid (Landacre Gate, 1hr25mins). Cross over, and take a(n initially) better-defined path towards the top of the shallow domed hill ahead of you. The compass bearing is 105° . You will soon come to the edge of a steep combe: slightly to the left is a gully that can be used as a downward path, marked by a large stone. Cross the stream and follow the path steeply up the other side. As you come back on to the open moor there are no defined paths, but head always



upwards (still at 105°) until you reach the trig point on the top of the hill (1hr50mins, [4]). This is Brightworthy Barrows, at 428m the highest point of the walk. Only one of the original three burial mounds remains.

From the trig point, head almost due south (175°) on a well-defined path that bows slightly to the right before arriving at a road almost opposite the corner of a hedge of small trees (2hrs, [5]). Walk across the moor alongside the hedge (boggy, uneven ground); in 20-25 minutes this brings you to a wide track (2hr20mins, [6]). Your route continues to the left on the track; through the gate on the right is Porchester's Post, once marking the boundary of the Carnarvon Estate. In three or four minutes pass a grid of trees on the right marking old field boundaries – these are called Four Fields or Tudball's Splats. Three minutes or so past the trees, a minor path crosses: turn right here, then after passing an area of tussocky grass, strike off to the left on a grassy path to head just to the right of the summit of Withypool Hill. A ring of brushwood and gorse marks the remains of a Bronze Age stone circle, the larger of only two on Exmoor, while behind you views stretch back to Brightworthy Barrows and beyond. Continue to the summit of Withypool Hill (2hr55mins, [7]), where there is a small barrow and makeshift cairn. The easiest way off the hill is to take the narrow but well-defined path westwards to the left (approximately 280°), towards Brightworthy Barrows, and descend back to an obvious crossing track. Turn right here, then follow the path gradually downhill until it meets a road (3hr10mins, [8]). Turn right back on to the path, now following it until it comes to another hard road; turn left here, and walk back into Withypool (3hr20mins). The tea room is just over the bridge, with tables and vintage petrol pumps outside (in winter when it is closed, there is a tea/coffee machine in the post office opposite). The Royal Oak is a little further along on the left.

Alternative walk: Lanacre, Brightworthy Barrows and Withypool Hill (● 5.8 miles, ascents and descents of 280 metres). Start from Landacre Bridge; if the car parks near the bridge are full, there is usually parking a further 500m uphill. Head away from the bridge as for the main walk, but don't turn right: continue uphill on the road until you come to the cattle grid at Landacre Gate. Join the main walk here, at the 1hr25min point, turning left for Brightworthy Barrows. After descending to the 2hr point of the main walk ([5]), turn left on the road. In around ten minutes the road bends left; head right on a signposted bridleway next to a small vehicle pull-in. In two minutes or so the path goes through two small gullies. Bear slightly left here, taking the better-defined, right-hand path, heading for the right-hand side of Withypool Hill (100°). At a crossing path, continue ahead for a couple more minutes, then after passing an area of tussocky grass, strike off to the left on a grassy path to head just to the right of the summit of Withypool Hill. Pass the ring of brushwood and gorse marking the stone circle, then continue to the summit of Withypool Hill. Take the narrow but well-defined path sharp

left (280°), towards Brightworthy Barrows, and continue straight ahead at any crossing paths. At the road turn left over a bridge, then fork right on a private road to Knighton and Brightworthy. Follow this lane down and up again; at the gate for Knighton Farm, turn left. Keep roughly parallel with the hedge, switching from well-defined track to rough moor to track to tussocky bog, eventually bearing around to the right until Landacre Bridge comes into sight on the left. Rejoin the main walk at the 40-min point ([1]) where the path emerges from the gate on the right.



Landacre Bridge

Note: An earlier version of this walk used a longer route from point [5] to Porchester's Post. This has now been removed because it has been reported as badly waterlogged for most of the year.

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