



Walk 27A. Dulverton and Tarr Steps.

- 10.7 miles, ascents and descents of 500 metres. 4 hours 5 minutes continuous walking, allow 5-6 hours.

Terrain: Paths, tracks and fields, some mud and slippery rock when wet. Some walking on roads.

Access: By car, park in the long-stay car park next to Exmoor House (SS 912 280, TA22 9HL, £). Dulverton is served by bus 25 from Taunton, Wiveliscombe and Bampton, 198 from Minehead and 398 from Tiverton and Bampton.

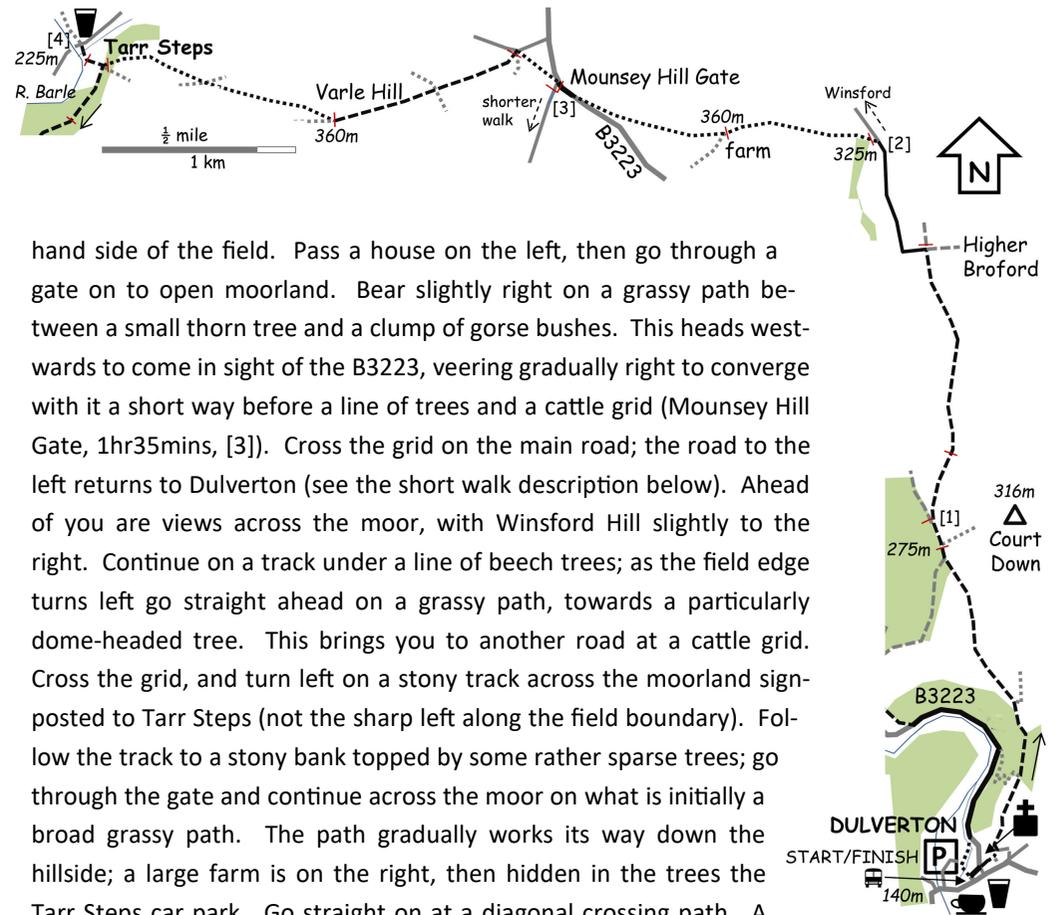
Map: Croydecycle 56 Dulverton and Tarr Steps or OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

Refreshments: Plenty of options in Dulverton, inn at Tarr Steps, tea garden at Marsh Bridge.

THIS WALK LINKS ONE OF EXMOOR'S MOST ATTRACTIVE SMALL TOWNS with one of its major attractions, the clapper bridge over the River Barle known as Tarr Steps. There are three main routes between the two places. One of them is described in Walk 28, along the river from Hawkridge. This walk uses the other two, north and north-west of Dulverton. The return is mainly on tarmac, but for most of the way the road snakes quietly between remote farms and houses, and gives intermittent views over the Barle valley. A short-cut from Mounsey Hill Gate can be taken for a circular walk from Dulverton of just over seven miles.

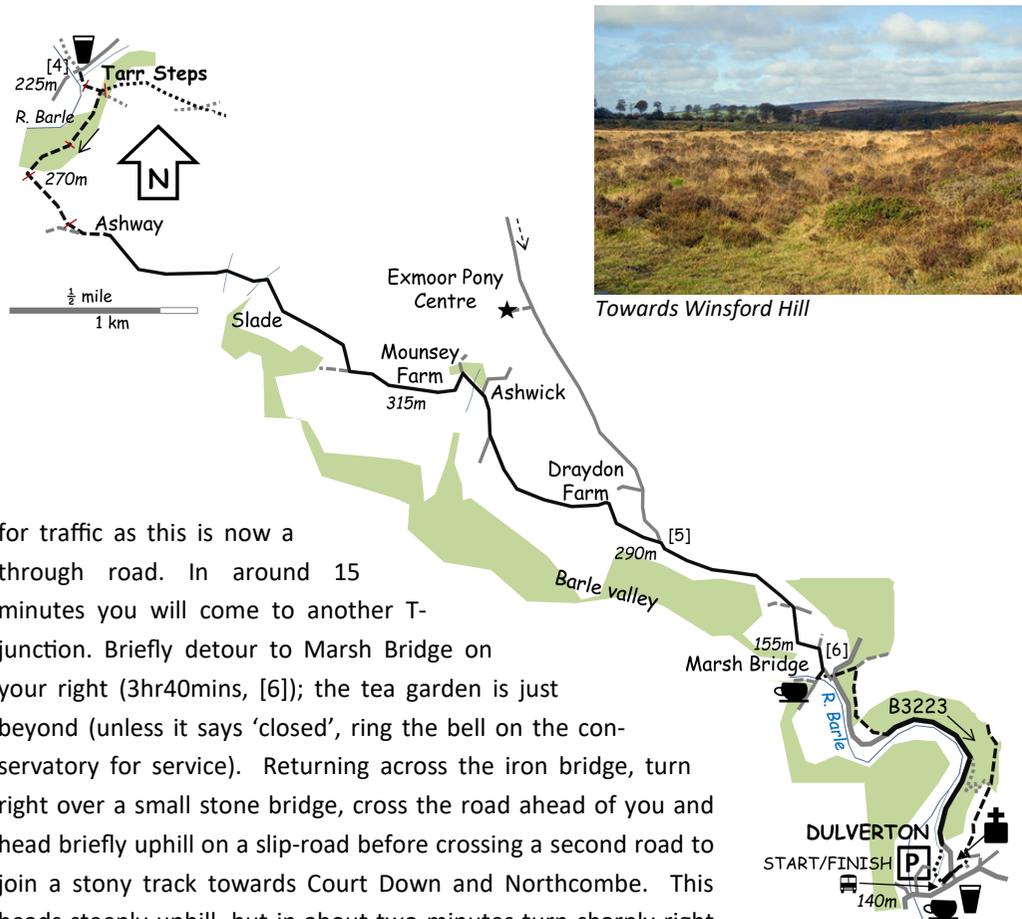
From the long-stay car park in Dulverton, head up the steps near the pay machine and turn right down a small alley that brings you out next to the National Park information centre (an alternative is first to visit the excellent heritage centre, leaving through the information centre). Turn left on the road to walk through the town square, continuing past the Lion Hotel then on a path to the right-hand side of the church. Go through a small alley between the church and a house, continuing uphill beside the churchyard. Turn left when you come to a T-junction, and bend right on to a stony and potentially slippery lane at a former school. Continue uphill towards Broford, ignoring any paths or tracks to right or left. After almost half an hour on this lane, pass another lane coming in from the left, then go through a field gate. In another minute or so take the right-hand (ungated) fork (40mins, [1]). The lane comes into the open before passing through another gate and back between hedges. Views gradually open up to the right over the Exe Valley. About 15 minutes after the gate, arrive at a junction and turn left on a lane signposted to Winsford.

The lane soon bends sharply right. Eight or ten minutes later (1hr10mins, [2]) turn left through a field gate on a signposted bridleway to Mounsey Hill Gate, keeping close to the left-



hand side of the field. Pass a house on the left, then go through a gate on to open moorland. Bear slightly right on a grassy path between a small thorn tree and a clump of gorse bushes. This heads westwards to come in sight of the B3223, veering gradually right to converge with it a short way before a line of trees and a cattle grid (Mounsey Hill Gate, 1hr35mins, [3]). Cross the grid on the main road; the road to the left returns to Dulverton (see the short walk description below). Ahead of you are views across the moor, with Winsford Hill slightly to the right. Continue on a track under a line of beech trees; as the field edge turns left go straight ahead on a grassy path, towards a particularly dome-headed tree. This brings you to another road at a cattle grid. Cross the grid, and turn left on a stony track across the moorland signposted to Tarr Steps (not the sharp left along the field boundary). Follow the track to a stony bank topped by some rather sparse trees; go through the gate and continue across the moor on what is initially a broad grassy path. The path gradually works its way down the hillside; a large farm is on the right, then hidden in the trees the Tarr Steps car park. Go straight on at a diagonal crossing path. A final steep section brings you to a junction and, on the right, a gate. Go through the gate, downhill on a stony track, and come to the River Barle. Turn right and cross a small stream to arrive at Tarr Steps and the Tarr Farm Inn, a convenient if normally busy halfway stop (2hr5mins, [4]). From here you can either continue the walk as described below to return on the north side of the Barle, or pick up Walk 25 at its 2hr30min point to continue to Hawkridge and return south of the river.

To return, start to retrace your steps, but continue ahead on the main path (bridleway to Ashway) instead of turning left. The track heads up through woodland and through a gate to become a grassy path, before turning sharply left at a field gate. Go through, and follow it with the field boundary on your right to come to another gate and Ashway farm. The track now becomes a surfaced lane, which takes an undulating and winding route past Slade, Mounsey Farm and Ashwick House, Ashwick, and finally Draydon Farm before coming to a T-junction (3hr25mins, [5]). Turn right here (the short-cut rejoins from the left), and look out



for traffic as this is now a through road. In around 15 minutes you will come to another T-junction. Briefly detour to Marsh Bridge on your right (3hr40mins, [6]); the tea garden is just beyond (unless it says 'closed', ring the bell on the conservatory for service). Returning across the iron bridge, turn right over a small stone bridge, cross the road ahead of you and head briefly uphill on a slip-road before crossing a second road to join a stony track towards Court Down and Northcombe. This heads steeply uphill, but in about two minutes turn sharply right on a more level track. Five minutes later this arrives at a road, the B3223; turn left here, looking out for traffic. This is perhaps the prettiest route into Dulverton, with houses nestling under the cliffs on the left, and the river and then the mill stream on the right. When you come to a house on the right with three windows facing you above each other, cross the stream and turn immediately left on a narrow path that returns to the car park and town centre.

Shorter walk: Dulverton and Mounsey Hill Gate (● 7.3 miles, ascents and descents of 330 metres). At Mounsey Hill Gate, cross the cattle grid then turn left over another cattle grid on the road signposted to the Exmoor Pony Centre and (former) Ashwick Hotel. The road is wide and fairly straight as far as the Pony Centre (open daily except Tuesdays and Saturdays, closed for the winter), but soon after it becomes narrow as it winds downhill: keep an eye (and ear) out for traffic. Soon after it starts descending, the main route joins from the right at the 3hr25min point ([5]); there are good views from here across the Barle valley. Continue back to Dulverton as described above.

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