



Walk 27A. Dulverton and Tarr Steps.

- 10.7 miles, 4 hours 5 minutes. Ascents and descents of 500 metres.

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.

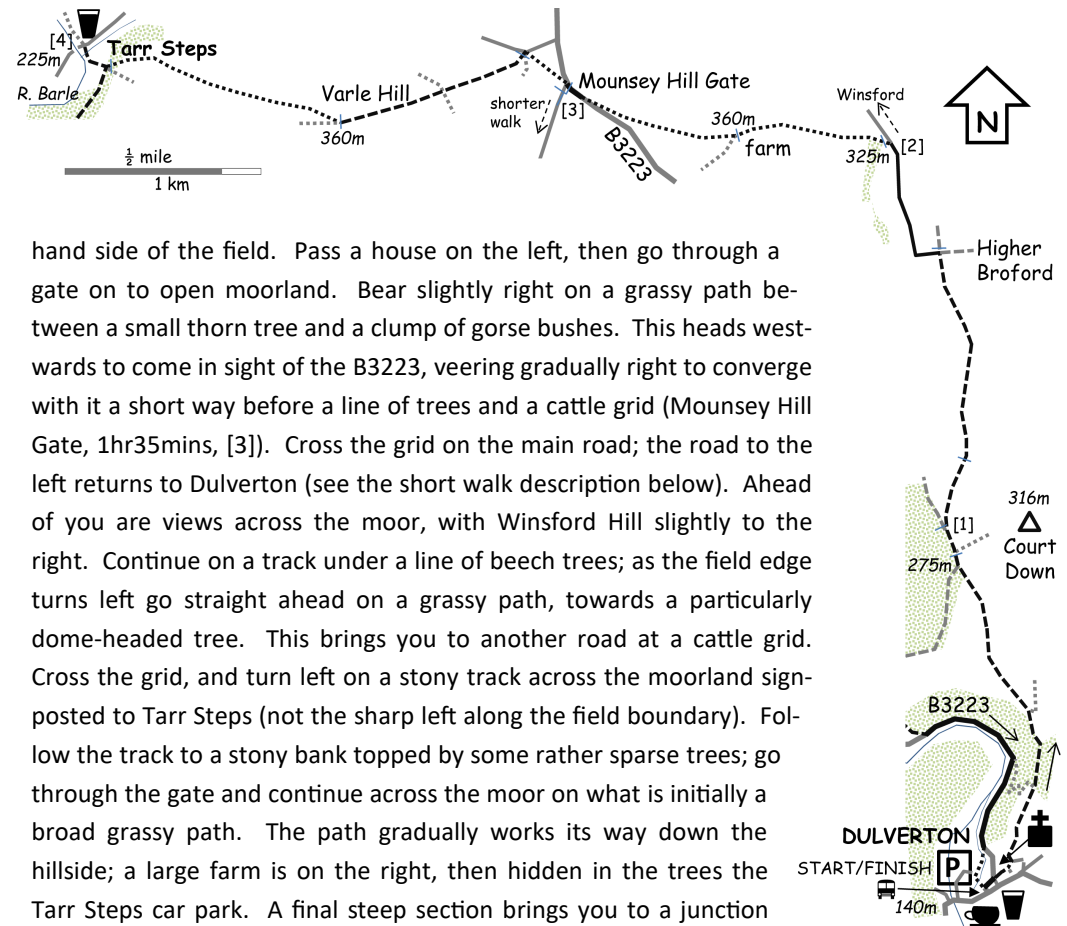
Map: Croydecycle 56 Dulverton and Tarr Steps or OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

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

THIS ROUTE 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 several routes between the two places. Two of them are described in Walk 28, as far as Hawkrigde; these can easily be extended via the road to come to Tarr Steps. This walk uses the other two, north and north-west of Dulverton. Any two of the four can be combined to make up a circular route of between 10 and 14 miles, and a short-cut from Mounsey Hill Gate can be taken to give a circular walk from Dulverton of just over seven miles.

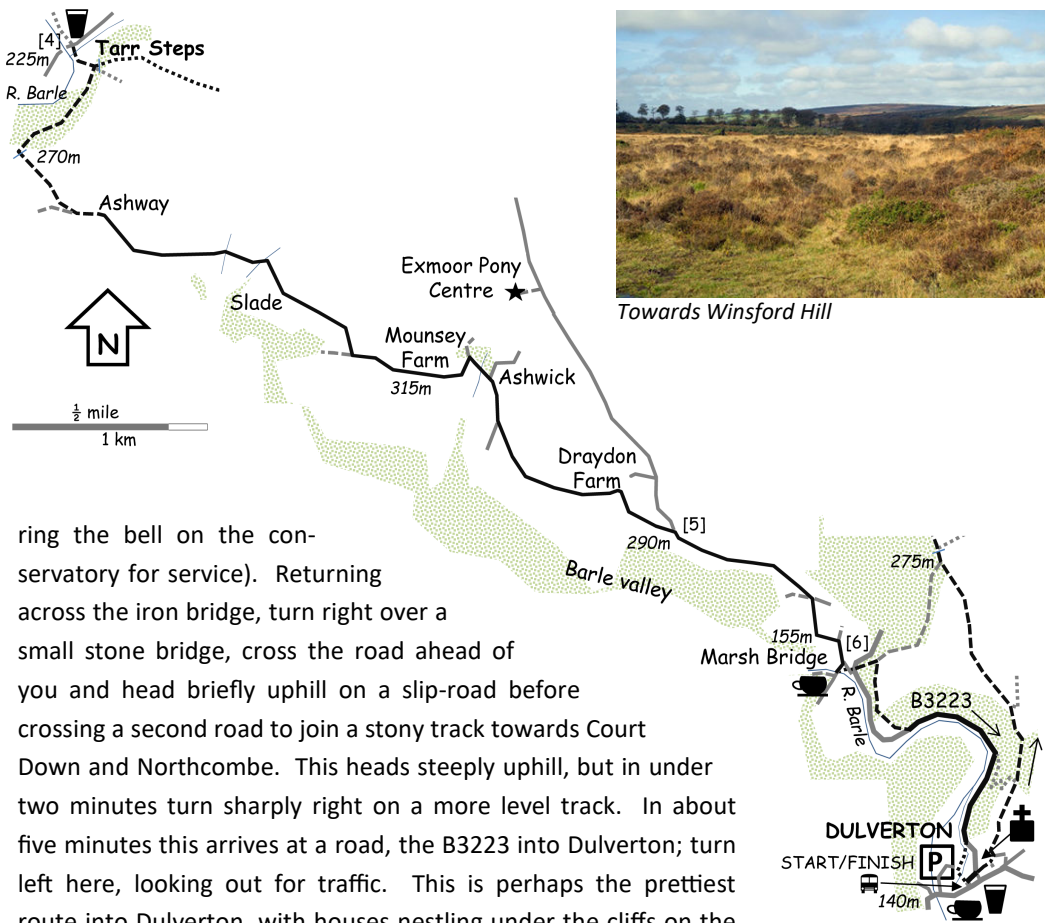
From the long-stay car park in Dulverton, head up the steps near the pay machine and turn right down a small alley that brings you out next to the National Park information centre (an alternative is first to visit the excellent heritage centre, leaving through the information centre). Turn left on the 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 don't go through the next gate, but take the right fork for Broford and Winsford (40mins, [1]). The lane eventually comes into the open with views particularly to the east over the Exe Valley. Shortly afterwards, arrive at a double field gate at a sort of crossroads; turn left here on a surfaced lane towards 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. 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 Hawkrigde and return south of the river.

To return, start to retrace your steps, but continue ahead on the main path instead of turning left. The track heads up through woodland before turning sharply left to come to a field gate. Go through, and follow it to 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',



Towards Winsford Hill

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 under two minutes turn sharply right on a more level track. In about five minutes this arrives at a road, the B3223 into Dulverton; 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 to follow it back to the car park and town centre.

Shorter walk: Dulverton and Mounsey Hill Gate (● 7.3 miles, 2 hours 45 minutes, 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), 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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