



Walk 32. Minehead, Dunster and the Grabbist ridge.

- 10.2 miles, ascents and descents of 450 metres. 4 hours constant walking, allow 5-5½ hours total.

Terrain: Fairly easy walking on paths, roads and the beach; some parts potentially muddy.

Access: By car, park anywhere in Minehead and walk to the station. The walk can also be started from Dunster, in the main car park (SS 993 439, TA24 6AS, £) or National Trust members can park free in the castle car park (but check you have enough time to do the walk before it closes). Bus 28 runs from Taunton to Dunster and Minehead (daily), and 198 from Dulverton (not Sundays); the trains run most days between April and October.

Map: Croydecycle 01 Minehead Dunster Selworthy; OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

Refreshments: In Minehead and Dunster.

AT FIRST GLANCE MINEHEAD IS A FAIRLY TYPICAL VICTORIAN HOLIDAY RESORT, though there is far more to it than the sea front: among other things it has an attractive small harbour and a quiet old town that sits below a steep wooded hill, the *mynedd* that is thought to be the origin of the town's name (see walk 12). It is also the terminus of England's longest enthusiast-run railway. This walk follows the coast path almost at sea level before turning inland for Dunster. A back way through this well-preserved but busy medieval village takes you up through woods and on to the Grabbist ridge, with views over Minehead and the Bristol Channel. The final part of the walk explores part of Minehead's old town and harbour. An alternative, easier return route shown on the map opposite follows back roads from Dunster to Minehead rather than ascending Grabbist Hill. A short walk around Dunster is also included.

From Minehead station entrance turn right along the sea front, passing Butlins' holiday village. As the paved promenade runs out, walk in to the golf club car park and turn left on a narrow path alongside the clubhouse; this takes you between the course and the beach (alternatively walk along the beach and then join the path). At the end of the course (37mins, [1]), turn right on a path signposted to Dunster Station. Cross a footbridge, turn left, pass a farm, and cross the railway. Take the first road left (Sea Lane), and in under a minute turn right on a footpath (the Jubilee Walk) to walk alongside the River Avill. Look out for a footbridge on the right, crossing it to continue on the opposite bank. Follow the signs for Dunster: these will take you around the back of houses and under the A39 through a subway (1hr, [2]). Turn left, then right on the A396 into Dunster. Pass the car park, a small shopping precinct and the National Park Centre on the left, then fork right on a narrow street between houses (1hr7mins, [3]). Follow this around to the left; you will have glimpses over Dunster to the left. Go beneath an arch. A dovecote with a small garden is on the right, and through a door on the left is a walled garden belonging to the church. The 15th-century church is a little

further on, on the left; it has an attractive vaulted ceiling and is worth a short detour. Cross diagonally right in front of the school, joining a lane signposted as a path. Turn left at a T-junction, pass the allotments, and come to a cemetery.

At the first junction take the left-hand path next to the graveyard. Shortly afterwards, a path heads left downhill (1hr20mins, [4]). Ignore it, keeping right on the main path towards Wootton Courtenay (known locally as Goosey Path); this ascends gradually up the side of the hill. Ignore a track off to the left, then head more steeply uphill until you arrive at a seat. The next stage of the walk follows the Grabbist ridge westwards. Turn left on a broad path, which brings you to a second seat at a junction (Holes Corner, 1hr55mins, [5]). Fork right (not the downhill path to the right) to continue along the ridge, with views opening up to Minehead and North Hill. Pass a crossing path, go past a vehicle barrier and keep ahead on a dirt path where the gravel track bends right. Cross another diagonal path, keeping alongside the wood ('Tivington 2½'), then in about five minutes turn sharply right and downhill on a path with a confirming blue-topped bridleway marker (2hr25mins, [6]; the signpost, just beyond the junction, is to Periton). Keep

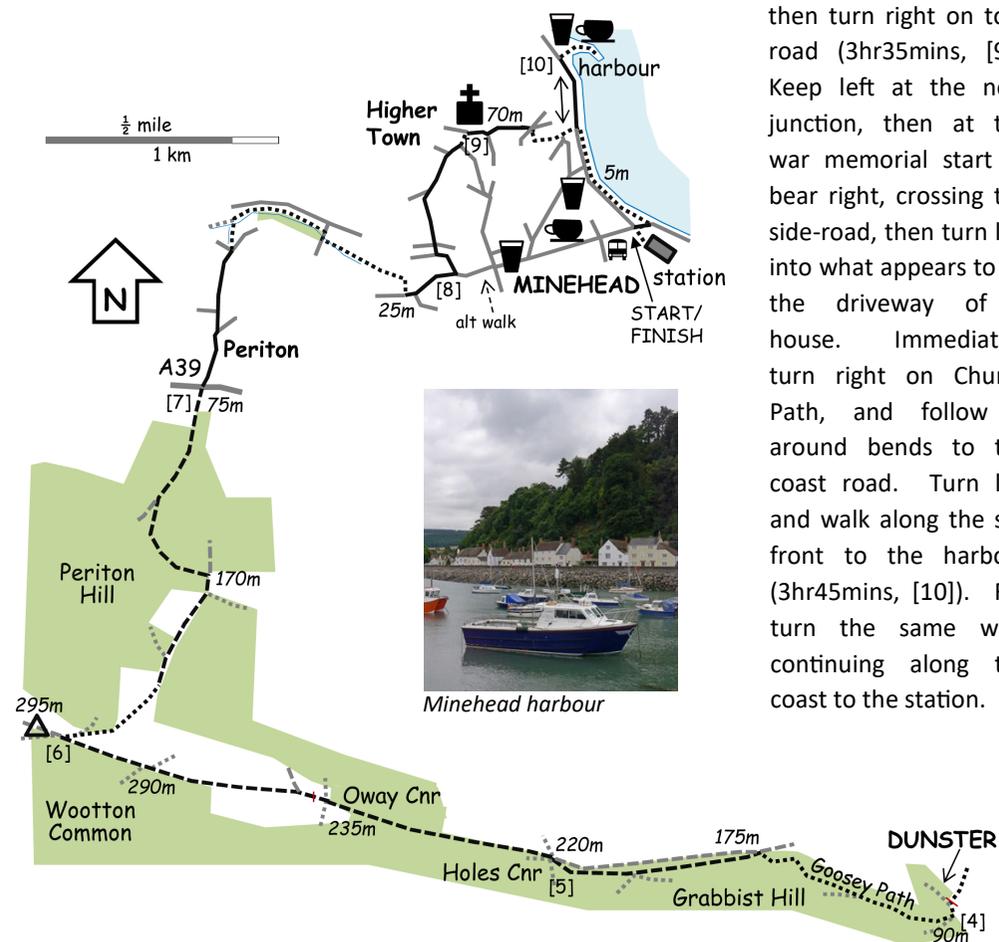


Conygar Tower

right, with the conifers to your left. The path descends steeply and comes to another conifer wood in front of you. Keep ahead (slightly to the left) as you enter it, then bear left and downhill at the next junction. When you meet a T-junction, turn right and stroll down Periton Combe to the A39 (2hr55mins, [7]). Cross this fast road carefully into Periton Lane opposite; Periton was once a small village, now absorbed into Minehead.

A short way down Periton Lane turn left into Whitworth Road. At the turn for Lime Close fork left on a footpath beside a small stream that runs behind some houses. Turn right at a T-junction and follow the path alongside the stream through a linear park. At a road turn right then left; the path opens out into another park enclosed behind the gardens of houses. At its end follow the path to the right, then turn left on a road. At the next T-junction (2hr55mins, [8]) you can turn right to head back along the main shopping street to the station and sea front, but the main walk turns left, then first right into Western Lane. The road narrows at a crossroads; keep ahead until you come to a junction, then bear right into Vicarage Lane. When this bends right to become Church Street, continue ahead up the steps. Keep right,

then turn right on to a road (3hr35mins, [9]). Keep left at the next junction, then at the war memorial start to bear right, crossing the side-road, then turn left into what appears to be the driveway of a house. Immediately turn right on Church Path, and follow it around bends to the coast road. Turn left and walk along the sea front to the harbour (3hr45mins, [10]). Return the same way, continuing along the coast to the station.



Shorter alternative via Alcombe (● 7 miles, ascents and descents of 220 metres; map on previous page). Follow the main walk as far as the school in Dunster. Turn right on the road (St George's Street). Pass a farm and go straight on at a staggered crossroads into Combeland Road. Continue past houses and a pub until the road meets the A39 in Alcombe (2hr20mins). Turn left, walk to the roundabout, and bear right into Alcombe Road, a wide and initially leafy street that takes you into the centre of Minehead. Come to a church and a small pedestrian square on the left (2hr35mins); on the left there is a statue of Queen Anne, made in 1719 a few years after her death. The walk can be shortened here by turning right to return to the station, but otherwise continue diagonally to the right into Holloway Street. As its name suggests this is an old holloway, a route that has been worn below the level of the surrounding landscape. Follow the road uphill and pass the front of a former school. Turn right into Church Street, with the church directly ahead. When you come to a sharp bend at a thatched house, turn right to ascend Church Steps and rejoin the main walk at its 3hr35min point ([9]).

Short walk: Dunster and Conygar Tower (● 2.4 miles, ascents and descents of 150 metres). Start from the main car park in Dunster. Walk past the Rohan shop and turn left on to the road, then right at a cream-painted house ([3]) and immediately left on to a footpath. Go uphill, through a gate, and turn left at a T-junction, continuing uphill. Where the main path swings right, keep left on a smaller path. After the path starts to descend ignore the first (narrow) path to the right, but keep right and upwards at a fork; soon arrive at a stone arch, part of the Conygar folly (*coney garth*, an enclosure where rabbits were kept for eating). Passing through the arch, continue up steps, then along the hilltop on a narrow path until you come to the tower. This conspicuous landmark was built in 1775 for Henry Luttrell of Dunster Castle, with no apparent function other than as a landscape feature. To return, start to retrace your steps then take the first turn left; this path soon rejoins your outward route. Look out for the gate on the right, return to the cream house ([4]), and turn right on a narrow street between houses. Now follow the instructions for the main walk until you come to the cemetery. Keep left at both junctions, to descend gradually to a road. Turn left here, and left on to the main road: there is no footpath, so watch for traffic. At the Foresters Arms turn right into Park Street, fork right at a car park, and walk down to Gallox Bridge. Return as far as the car park and take a path beside a thatched cottage. Turn left at its end to walk on a road beside the mill leat. Turn right at the main road. The back entrance to the National Trust castle soon appears on your right, but unless you want to visit follow the road through the signal-controlled section to come into the centre of the village. Walk past the yarn market and return to the car park.

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