



## Walk 32. Minehead and Dunster.

- 7.6 miles, 2 hours 45 minutes. Ascents and descents of 240 metres.

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

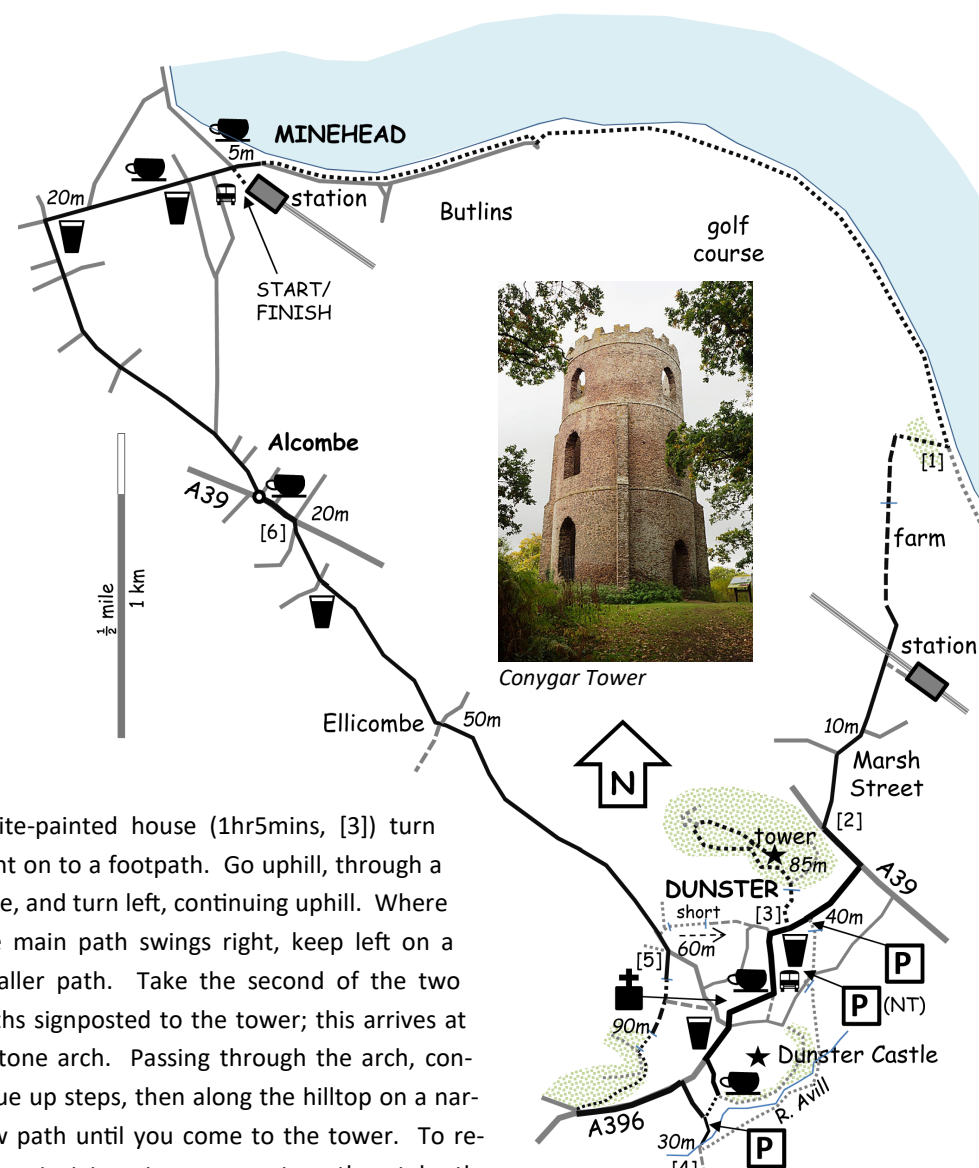
Access: By car, park anywhere in Minehead and walk to the station. The walk can also be started from Dunster, in the main car park (SS 993 439, TA24 6AS, £) or National Trust members can park free in the castle car park (but check you have enough time before it closes to do the walk). Bus 28 runs from Taunton to Dunster and Minehead, and 198 from Dulverton; the railway runs most days between April and October.

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

Refreshments: In Minehead and Dunster.

MINEHEAD IS A FAIRLY TYPICAL VICTORIAN HOLIDAY RESORT, though it is not without interest: in particular it has an attractive small harbour and sits below a steep wooded hill (explored in Walk 12), the *mynedd* that is thought to be the origin of the town's name. It is also the terminus of the West Somerset Railway, England's longest enthusiast-run railway. This walk follows the coast path almost at sea level before turning inland for Dunster. A detour is included to Conygar Tower (*coney garth*, so an enclosure where rabbits were kept for eating). This conspicuous landmark was built in 1775 for Henry Luttrell of Dunster Castle, with no apparent function other as a landscape feature and counterpoint to the castle itself. If you don't have enough time to visit the castle, take a look at the old wool market building and the 15th-century church, which has an attractive vaulted ceiling. The walk continues to Gallox Bridge (also encountered in walks 30 and 31) before returning through some of the back lanes of Dunster and on to Alcombe, on the southern edge of Minehead. Most of the walk is fairly flat apart from the climbs around Dunster; if you want to avoid these, just walk through the main street to the church and turn right to return to Alcombe.

If you haven't previously visited Minehead, make a short detour along the sea front to the harbour before starting (half a mile each way). Otherwise turn right out of the station and join the sea front heading eastwards, past Butlins' holiday village. As the paved promenade runs out, continue on a path that runs between the beach and a golf course. At the end of the course (37mins, [1]), turn right on a path signposted to Dunster Station. Cross a foot-bridge, turn left, pass a farm, and cross the railway. Continue into a residential area and come to a T-junction; turn left into Marsh Street and follow it to the main A39 (55mins, [2]). Cross the road (an underpass is provided), then turn right on the A396 towards Dunster. Pass the car park, a small shopping precinct and the National Park Centre on the left, then at a



white-painted house (1hr5mins, [3]) turn right on to a footpath. Go uphill, through a gate, and turn left, continuing uphill. Where the main path swings right, keep left on a smaller path. Take the second of the two paths signposted to the tower; this arrives at a stone arch. Passing through the arch, continue up steps, then along the hilltop on a narrow path until you come to the tower. 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 white house (1hr25mins), and turn right to continue along the main road into Dunster.

Follow the main street as leisurely as you want through Dunster. Pass the church and the entrance to the castle, continue down West Street, then turn left into Mill Lane. Turn right on a path signed 'Gallox Bridge', keeping left at the end (1hr35mins, [4]). Walk down to the bridge and ford, then return but keep left on the road. Arriving at the Foresters Inn, turn left

on to the main road: watch for traffic. In just over five minutes a road turns off to the right. Turn sharply right here on to a bridleway going uphill, signposted to Minehead. Follow this towards Dunster. Go through a gate, alongside a cemetery and then through another gate on to a paved lane. As the lane bends right, continue ahead on a path, through a gate, then on to another road. Turn left at a T-junction (1hr55mins, [5]). Ignore several turnings to the left, following the road past a farm and straight on at a staggered crossroads. Continue past houses and a pub until the road meets the A39 in Alcombe (2hr20mins, [6]). Turn left, walk to the roundabout, and bear right into Alcombe Road. After twelve minutes or so the road bends left in a shopping area: turn right and return to the station.

**Short walk around Dunster** (● 2.3 miles, ascents and descents of 140 metres). Start the walk from the main car park in Dunster, crossing over and turning right at the white house ([3]) as described in the main walk. Follow the main walk as far as the 1hr55min point ([5]), turn left at the T-junction, but at the '30' sign turn right past a stone monument. Take the right-hand footpath through a pedestrian gate. Go through another gate and along a hard path, joining a road (note the view to the right to the castle), then turn left on the main road to return to the car park.

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