



## Walk 35. Roadwater, Nettlecombe and Monksilver.

- 8.3 miles, 3 hours 25 minutes. Ascents and descents of 500 metres.

Terrain: Mainly paths, tracks and fields.

Access: By car, there is limited parking on the route. There is normally space to park on a straight stretch of road opposite the garage in Lower Roadwater (ST 036 390, TA23 0RS), which adds half a mile at the start and end of the walk (with the garage on your left, walk into Roadwater). You may also be able to get permission to park in the village hall car park (ST 032 383, TA23 0QY), or the 'EMN' village hall at Monksilver (ST 076 374, TA4 4JE). The nearest bus is the 28 from Taunton to Minehead that stops at Washford, two miles from the start.

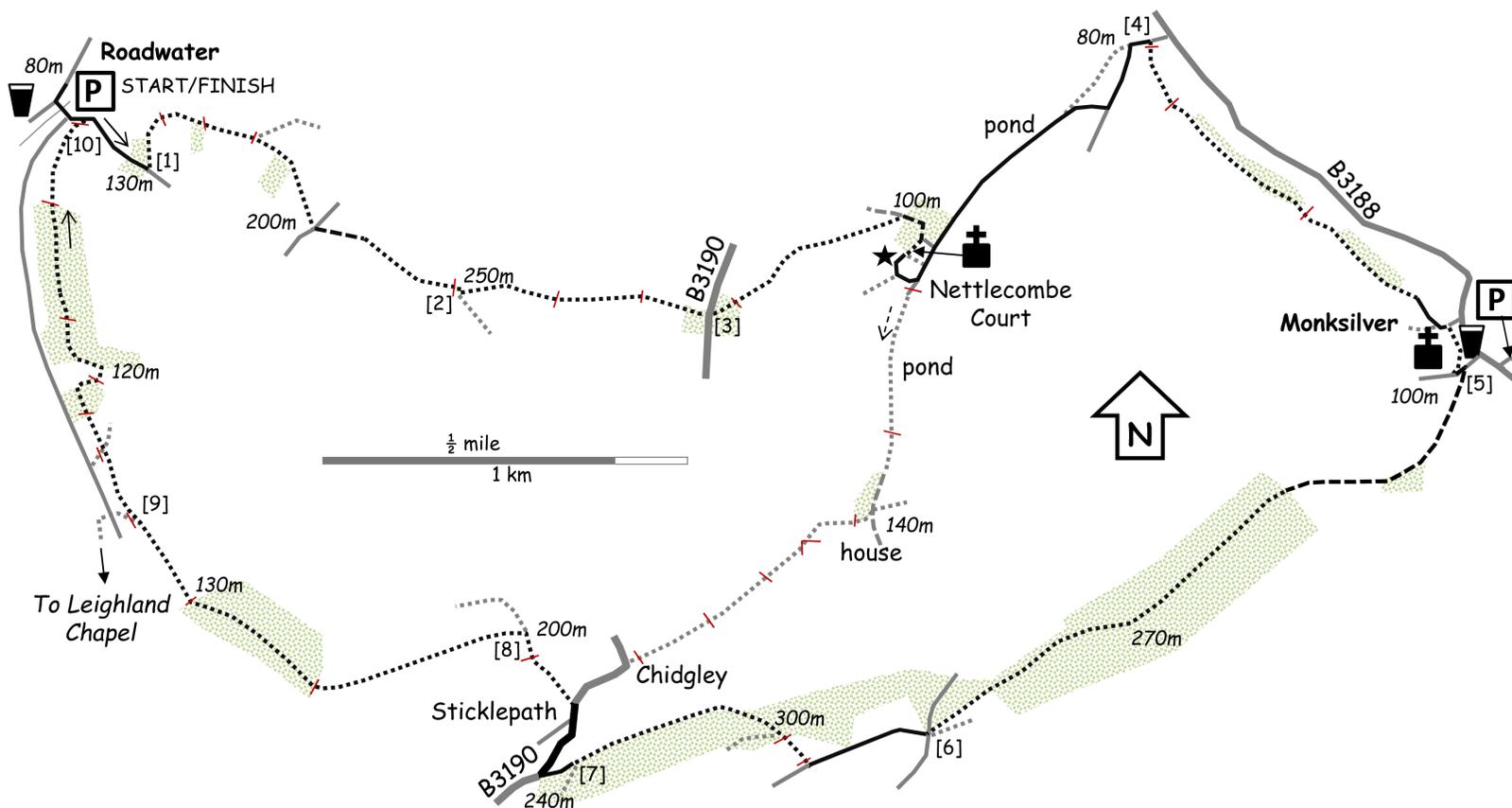
Map: OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

Refreshments: Pubs in Roadwater, Monksilver and nearby Torre and Washford.

THIS IS A WALK AMONG ROLLING HILLS on the often overlooked eastern edge of Exmoor National Park, taking in the attractive villages of Roadwater and Monksilver, as well as the manor and hamlet of Nettlecombe, now the home of a field studies centre. There are some steep sections, including the initial climb from Roadwater and an unremitting mile of ascent from Monksilver, but the rewards are the views across the lush, undulating landscape and (in the first half of the walk) the Bristol Channel. The final part of the walk includes an optional stroll along part of the Mineral Line, which is explored more fully in Walk 36.

Start from the village hall in Roadwater (ST 032 383). Pass the shop on your left, then immediately after Watersmeet Close turn left to go over a small bridge. Walk past some houses and up a steep hill. Where the road bends right, turn left and upwards on a path (15mins, [1]). Continue through a broken-down gate into

a field, keep left, and immediately go over a stile; now turn right uphill keeping the hedge on your right, then in five minutes cross into another field. Ignore the path going off to the left, but at the next junction where a track goes right and downhill, keep to the left of the hedge and continue upwards. Cross a narrow lane, and continue upwards on a sandy track. At the end of the first field start to follow the track around to the right, then turn left uphill so that the hedge is on your left. The gradient soon levels out. There is a stile at the end of the field, just to the right (40mins, [2]): cross it, and go straight ahead with the hedge to now your right (ignore the right turn, which goes to Chidgley). Follow the path along the field edge, eventually coming to a larger road [3]. Cross over and enter a small wood. The way on is not obvious, but aim first ahead and to the left then before reaching a gate swing around to the right a little: look for the blue marks on the trees. Go over a stile into the field in front of you. Follow the path with the field edge to your right, cross into a second field, then join a narrow lane. Turn right where it meets a track, pass a large house on your left, then walk through the churchyard to come to the imposing Nettlecombe Court, a 16th-century house that is now a field studies centre (1hr). The manor at Nettlecombe dates from Saxon times, and has never been sold but only passed between owners by succession, conquest, grant or marriage.



Leave Nettlecombe by turning left around the green, so that the church is on your left: follow the access road, passing a pond on the left, and turning left where it comes to a T-junction. Soon after a right-hand bend, take a footpath to the right signposted to Monksilver (1hr15mins, [4]): if you reach the main road you have gone too far. Go over a stile to the left followed by a second stile. Turn right then left, keeping to the right of a tree with a yellow arrow: walk parallel with and just above the line of trees to your left. The path shadows the B3188, the main road to Monksilver, which can be heard through the trees below. Come to a yellow-tipped post and drop down to a gate, cross a small stream in front of it that runs at a right angle to the valley, then climb up again to follow the path into a wooded strip. On entering Monksilver, head for the church: take a narrow path to the left of a red telephone box. If you are in need of refreshment, the Notley Arms is to the left: otherwise continue through the churchyard, turn left on to the road, then almost immediately right uphill on a bridleway (1hr35mins, [5]). The next mile is an unremitting ascent, which will bring you into a wood and eventually to a pleasant glade with some stout, spreading beech trees. From here the bridleway heads slightly to the right towards Colton Cross: look for the blue marker. At a junction (2hr15mins, [6]) cross straight over on to a tarmac road. A short signposted detour to the right will bring you to an escarpment with views across the Bristol Channel. On the road, pass a gated track and just afterwards turn right on to a bridleway. Follow it to a wood: you are now at the highest point of the walk, at 300m above sea level. Entering the wood, take the right-hand, downward fork. Views now open up to the right across Nettlecombe and beyond as the ground drops steeply to your right.

At a bridleway junction [7], keep right and descend to a main road. This is Sticklepath. Turn right, looking out for traffic: cars come around the bends at speed. Pass a no through road to the left and immediately afterwards turn left on to a bridleway. Where this comes to a cross-roads (2hr40mins, [8]), take the left-hand (bridleway) route towards Roadwater. Continue along the line of trees: don't descend into the valley, as there is no way through at the bottom. Pass through a gate into a wood. You are now above the Washford River valley and the route of the old West Somerset Mineral Line, which carried iron ore down from the Brendon Hills to Watchet for onward transport by sea (see walk 33). On leaving the wood, look out for a blue-marked gate on the left (3hr, [9]). Don't go through the gate\* but continue on the bridleway. A couple of minutes further on, ignore the path crossing the bridleway and shortly after enter a small wood. Come to a small valley and cross a stream to continue into the wood opposite, taking the upper, right-hand way. When you meet the road (3hr20mins, [10]) turn left over the bridge, then either left for the Valiant Soldier inn, or right to return to the start.

\*A narrow, grassy path leads down to the old Mineral Railway, now a lane, and links with Walk 36. For an alternative finish you can descend here and turn right to return to Roadwater on tarmac.

**Shorter walk: Roadwater and Nettlecombe** (● 5.6 miles, ascents and descents of 330 metres). Follow the main route as far as Nettlecombe. With your back to the house, cross the green and turn right to go through an iron kissing gate beside a field gate. Follow a grassy track upwards into a valley. Pass a pond, continue uphill, and go through two gates; the path now becomes narrower. At a signpost beneath a spreading oak, turn right ('Chidgley') to pass to the side of a house and alongside a stone shed, before bearing left through a pedestrian gate. Continue steeply upwards alongside the fence, cross two stiles at a field corner, and cross the field diagonally, heading well to the left of a domed, bushy tree. Go through the leftmost of the two field gates, marked by yellow paint. Follow the clearly-defined track through a second gate; at the farm, go through a pedestrian gate in a tall fence to come out in front of a large house. Turn left on the road, walk uphill, and turn right on a bridleway to rejoin the main walk just before the 2hr40min point ([8]).

**Extension to Comberow and Leighland Chapel** (● 11 miles, ascents and descents of 615 metres). Follow the main walk to Sticklepath. Turn right, then left on the no through road. In about ten minutes pass a farm, then bend sharply left and a few minutes later, right. About a minute after the right-hand bend, turn right through a gate on a signposted footpath. Head into the field on a narrow path through bracken, then go through a gate to continue on a wide ledge. Arrive at a T-junction, and turn left to join walk 36 at its 30min point ([2]). Follow it as far as the T-junction before the cottage ([4]), but turn right rather than left. Now reverse alternative walk 36 to come to Leighland Chapel and descend to the road ([8] in walk 36). Turn left here and return to Roadwater on this easy road, the bed of the old Mineral Line.



*Nettlecombe Court*

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