



### Walk 4. Parracombe to Lynton via the Heddon Valley.

- 9.5 miles, 4 hours 10 minutes. Ascents of 830 metres and descents of 915 metres.

Terrain: Fields, uneven and well-surfaced paths. ! Cliff paths above steep drops: alternative route described in the text. .

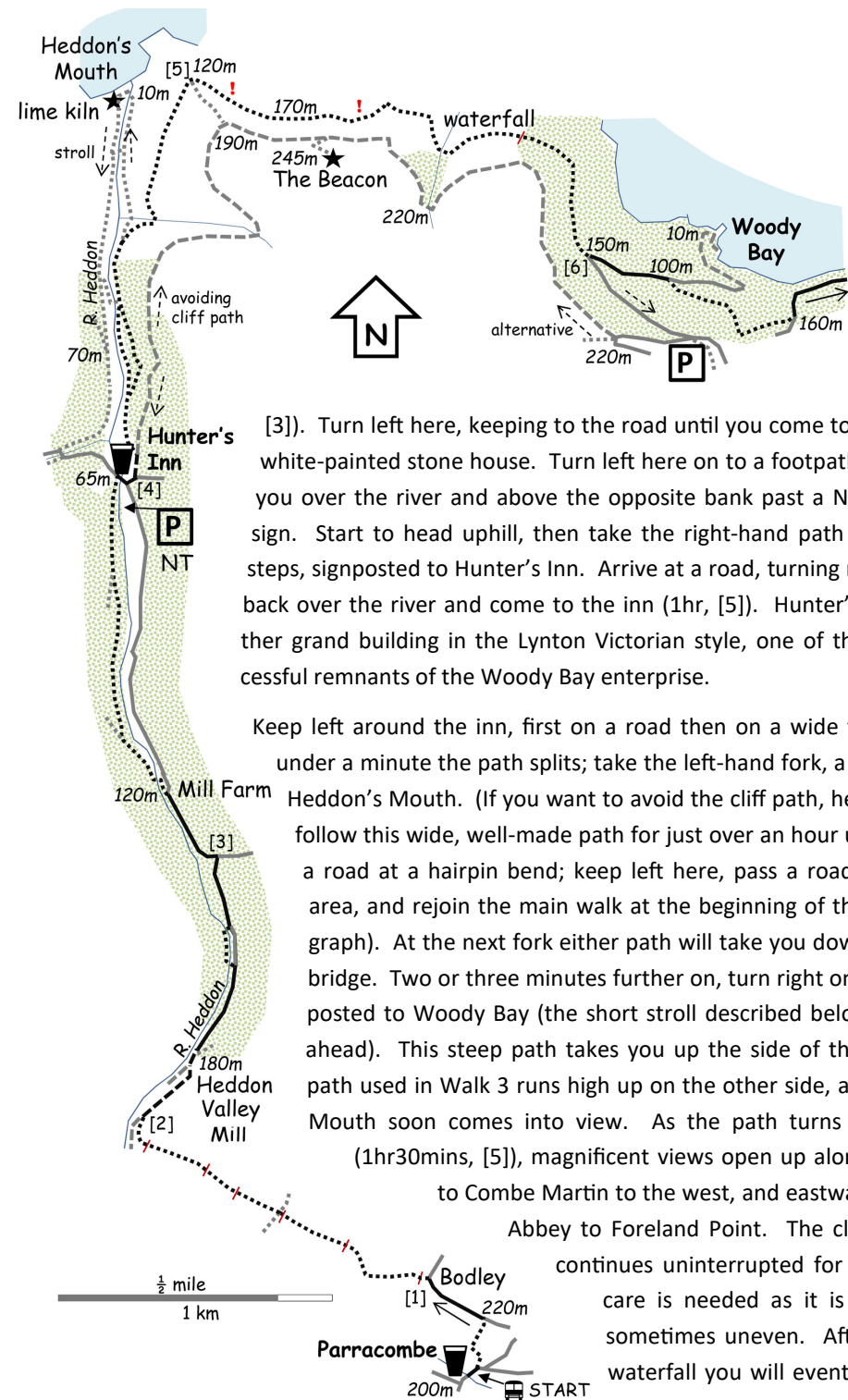
Access: Park in the main car park in Lynton, off Castle Hill (SS 721 493, near EX35 6JD, £) and take bus 310 to Parracombe (the bus stops at the entrance to the car park and in front of The Studio, almost opposite the path to the cliff railway). For the alternative walks, park at Hunter's Inn (SS 655 482, EX31 4PY). Bus 310 goes from Barnstaple to Lynton via Parracombe.

Map: Croydecycle 54 Lynton Lynmouth alternative with Hunters Inn, or OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

Refreshments: In Parracombe, Hunter's Inn, seasonal tea garden at Lee Bay, and in Lynton.

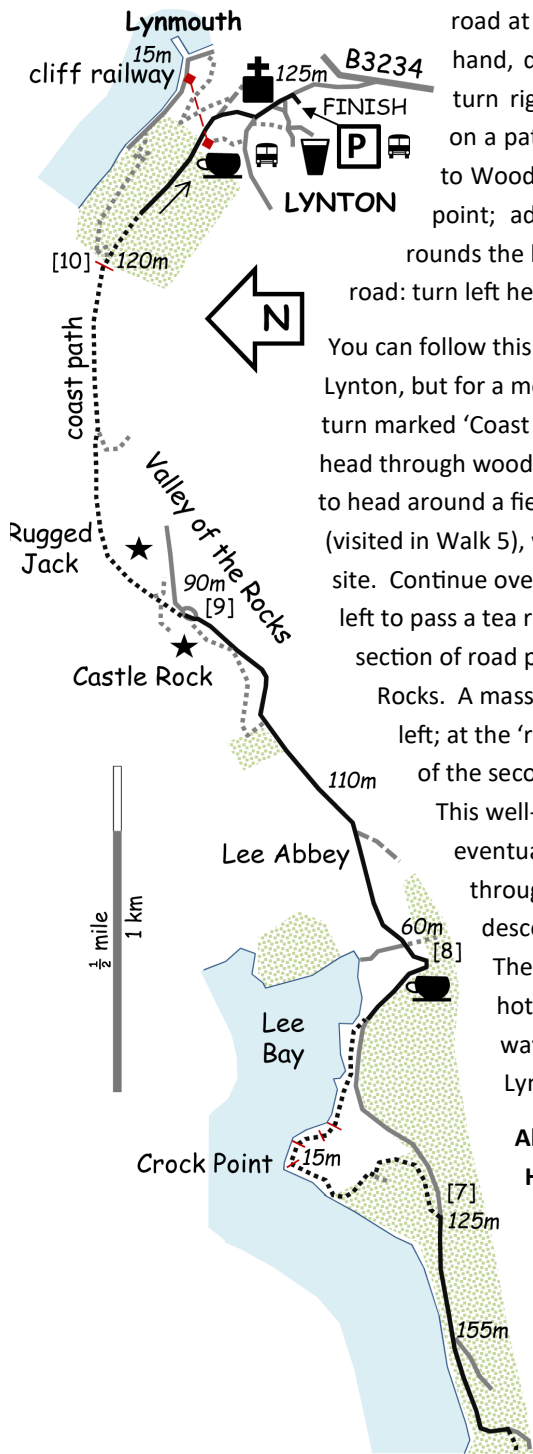
THIS IS A WALK OF CONTRASTS, starting in the pretty medieval village of Parracombe, taking you across fields, along the River Heddon and into the increasingly steep Heddon Valley. After a fairly stiff climb the walk continues on a high cliff path to Woody Bay and on to Lee Bay. The final stretch heads through the Valley of the Rocks before finishing in the rather genteel little Victorian town of Lynton. Optional detours, detailed in the shorter walks, descend to Heddon's Mouth and to Woody Bay. Woody Bay was the site of some over-ambitious plans in late Victorian times to create a resort to rival Lynton and Lynmouth, but they were never fully realised and the entrepreneur behind them, the former colonel and solicitor Benjamin Lake, finished bankrupt and jailed for fraud. Overall the walk is fairly strenuous, although the only long uphill stretch is the ascent of the Heddon Valley; the reward is one of the most scenic stretches of coast in England.

The bus from Lynton stops just before the Fox & Goose in Parracombe. Walk uphill away from the pub and take the first left, a narrow alley between houses signposted as a footpath to Bodley. At the top turn left on a road. Cross a small stream (7mins, [1]), then turn left just past Bodley Cottage and follow the footpath through the gate ahead. This grassy and possibly muddy path is bounded by hedges; follow it around to the right, then go through a gate marked by a yellow-topped post. Keep along the left-hand side of the field, passing through three more gates; at a fourth, join a stony track heading downwards alongside the River Heddon. Keep right at a wider track (25mins, [2]), and again at a surfaced driveway. Follow this alongside the river until you are directed to the left over a footbridge. The path soon crosses back again, next to a high metal gate; continue along the drive until it meets a road (40mins,



[3]. Turn left here, keeping to the road until you come to Mill Farm, a white-painted stone house. Turn left here on to a footpath. This takes you over the river and above the opposite bank past a National Trust sign. Start to head uphill, then take the right-hand path down rough steps, signposted to Hunter's Inn. Arrive at a road, turning right to cross back over the river and come to the inn (1hr, [5]). Hunter's Inn is a rather grand building in the Lynton Victorian style, one of the more successful remnants of the Woody Bay enterprise.

Keep left around the inn, first on a road then on a wide footpath. In under a minute the path splits; take the left-hand fork, a bridleway to Heddon's Mouth. (If you want to avoid the cliff path, head right and follow this wide, well-made path for just over an hour until it meets a road at a hairpin bend; keep left here, pass a roadside parking area, and rejoin the main walk at the beginning of the next paragraph). At the next fork either path will take you down to a stone bridge. Two or three minutes further on, turn right on a path signposted to Woody Bay (the short stroll described below continues ahead). This steep path takes you up the side of the valley; the path used in Walk 3 runs high up on the other side, and Heddon's Mouth soon comes into view. As the path turns to the right (1hr30mins, [5]), magnificent views open up along the coast: to Combe Martin to the west, and eastwards past Lee Abbey to Foreland Point. The cliff path now continues uninterrupted for over a mile; care is needed as it is narrow and sometimes uneven. After passing a waterfall you will eventually meet a



road at a hairpin bend (2hr10mins, [6]). Take the left-hand, downhill fork, but after three or four minutes turn right (signposted to Lynton, and New Zealand) on a path by a small building. (For an optional detour to Woody Bay continue ahead, and return to the same point; additional ascents of 90 metres). Your path rounds the head of a combe before ascending to a narrow road: turn left here, keeping an eye out for the occasional car.

You can follow this road all the way back to the car park in Lynton, but for a more interesting route look out for a left-hand turn marked 'Coast Path' (2hr40mins, [7]); descend steps and head through woods, before passing a cowshed and turning right to head around a field. You will soon have views over Lee Bay (visited in Walk 5), with Duty Point Tower and Lee Abbey opposite. Continue over stiles and head uphill back to the road. Turn left to pass a tea room (3hr10mins, [8]), then walk up the steep section of road past Lee Abbey to enter the Valley of the Rocks. A massive tor, Castle Rock, looms above you to the left; at the 'roundabout' (3hr35mins, [9]) head to the left of the second tor, Rugged Jack, to join the coast path. This well-made path heads along the cliff edge and eventually comes to a gate (3hr55mins, [10]): go through, and continue ahead unless you want to descend to Lynmouth via a zigzag path on the left. The path widens then becomes a road passing hotels and guest-houses. Cross over the Cliff Railway, keep right, and then come to a T-junction in Lynton: the car park is on the left.

**Alternative circular walk: Hunter's Inn, the Heddon Valley and Woody Bay** (● 6.8 miles, 3 hours, ascents and descents of 650 metres including Woody Bay). Start at Hunter's Inn. With your back to the inn, turn left and then take the path on the left, joining the main walk. Follow it as far as the 2hr10min point ([6]) and take the left-hand fork, but continue down to Woody Bay. Return to the hair-

pin bend, but now stay on the road, passing Wringapeak House before coming to a T-junction. Turn right here and pass a small roadside parking area. When the road bends sharply left, continue ahead on the lower of the two paths, a permissive bridleway that used to be the old carriage drive to Hunter's Inn. This wide, well-made path provides easy walking high above your outward route, returning all the way to Hunter's Inn. Ten minutes after it crosses the head of a combe, look out for a small path to the left which takes you up to The Beacon, the site of a Roman fortlet and signal station. Return to the main path, turn left and continue above the Heddon Valley to arrive back at Hunter's Inn.

**Stroll: Hunter's Inn and Heddon's Mouth** (● 2.1 miles, ascents and descents of 115 metres). With your back to Hunter's Inn, turn left and then take the path on the left; when it forks in under a minute, keep left. Take either path at the next fork to come to a stone footbridge. Keep on the main path to continue down to Heddon's Mouth. A second footbridge takes you across the river, but if the water is low it may be possible to splash across further down. Return along the western bank, turning left at the road to come to the inn.



Heddon's Mouth

© Stan Lester 2018. Last recce 3/2018. Please email editor@exmoorwalker.uk with any updates or comments.

This route description is provided freely and in good faith. You are welcome to use, copy and distribute it for personal and non-profit purposes (attribution—non-commercial—no derivatives). No responsibility is taken for any errors or omissions, or for your navigation or safety on the walk. Introductory and safety information at [exmoorwalker.uk](http://exmoorwalker.uk).