



## Walk 41. Dulverton to Bampton.

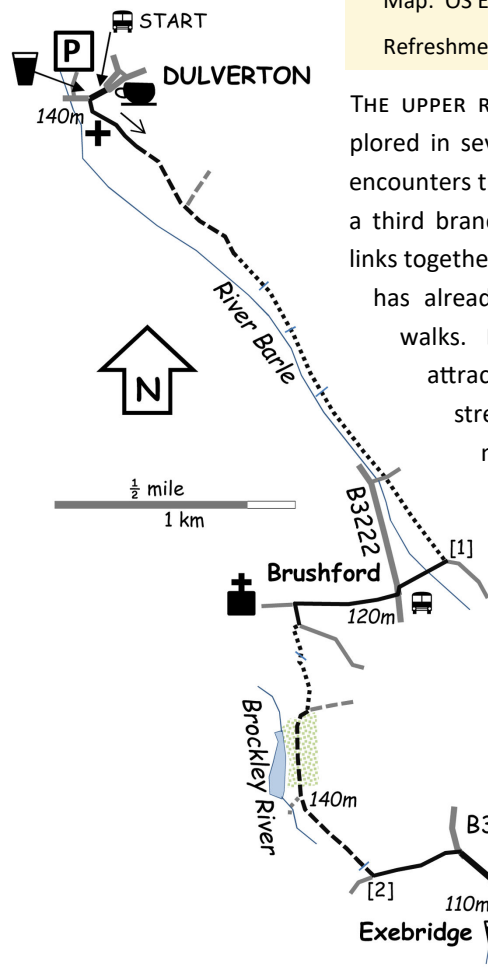
- 6 miles, 2 hours 10minutes. Ascents of 210 metres and descents of 250 metres.

Terrain: Roads, paths and fields, muddy in places.

Access: By car, park in Bampton (there are two car parks, a small one by the river at SS 959 222, near EX16 9LX, and a larger one off Station Road, SS 956 222, EX16 9QJ), and take the bus to Dulverton. The bus stop for the 25 is next to the war memorial, just up from the Swan Inn; the 398 also stops in Brook Street. By bus, Dulverton is on routes 25, 198 and 398, and Bampton on 25 and 398; buses run Monday to Saturday.

Map: OS Explorer 114 Exeter and the Exe Valley.

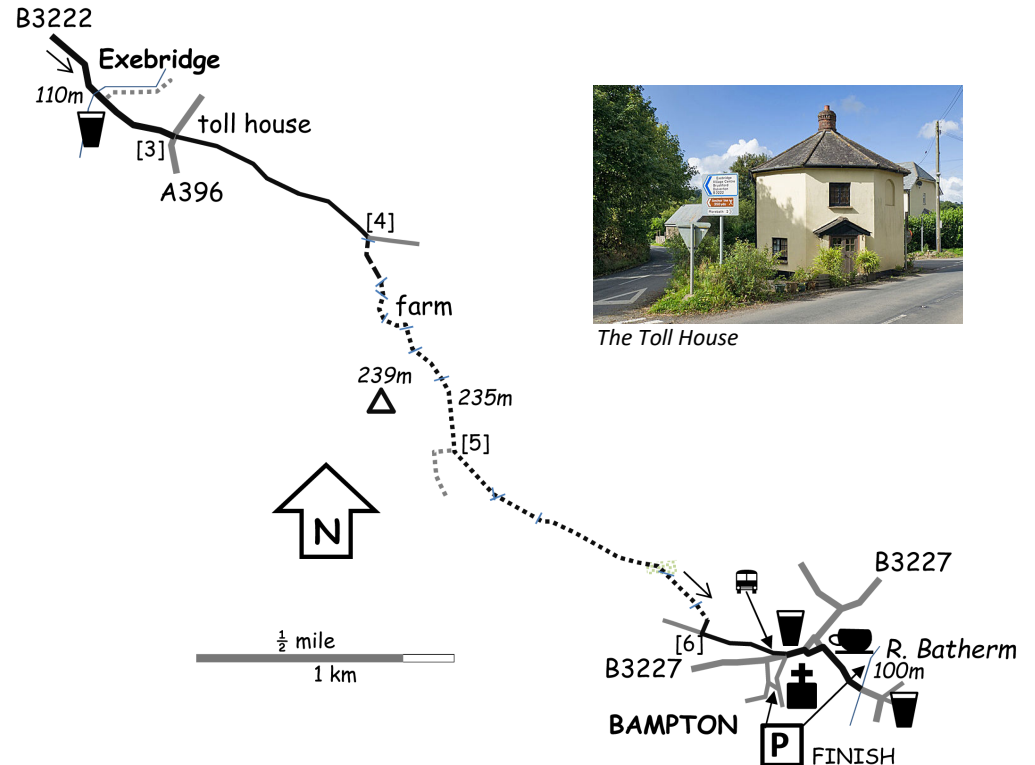
Refreshments: In Dulverton, Exebridge and Bampton.



THE UPPER REACHES OF THE RIVERS BARLE AND EXE are explored in several of the high moorland walks. This route encounters the rivers close to their junction, and finishes on a third branch of the same system, the Batherm. It also links together two delightful small market towns. Dulverton has already been introduced in several of the earlier walks. Bampton has a lower-key feel but it is still an attractive and satisfying place, with a wide main street that runs down to the river and catches the midday sun. Both offer plenty of refreshment options, and there is a pub mid-way at Exebridge with a beer garden on the river bank, making this an ideal slow stroll. The walk follows part of the Exe Valley Way, which runs from Exford to the sea at Exmouth; it is currently only signposted at the Bampton end.

Start at the bus stop in the centre of Dulverton. Head downhill towards the Bridge Inn, but before you get there turn left into Chapel Street. Pass

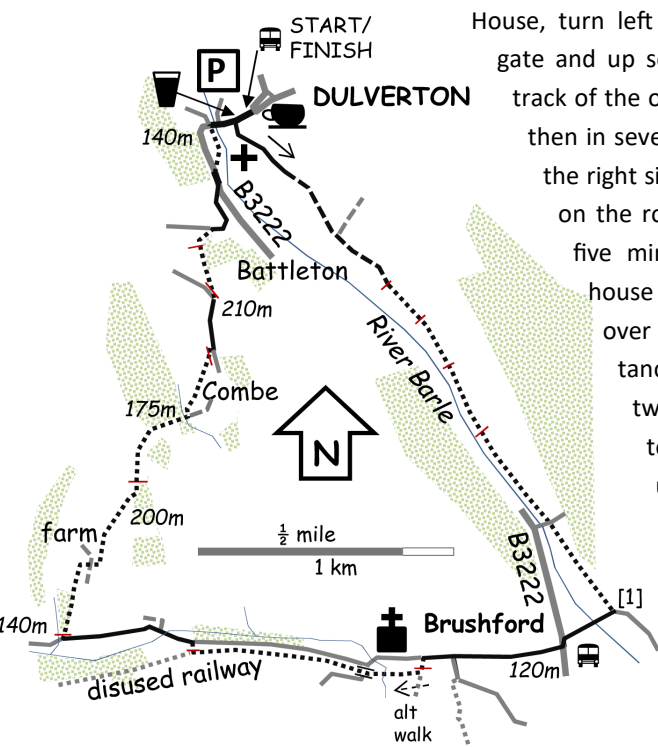
the chapel and continue along Mill Lane. The lane gradually narrows to become a footpath, then it heads across a series of flat fields in the lower Barle valley. Cross a driveway to a cottage (a short detour to the right brings you to 'New Bridge' over the River Barle), walk across the next field, then go through a gate and turn right on a narrow road (35mins, [1]). Cross the river, then cross diagonally left over the main road to continue into Brushford, signposted to the church and village hall (and, on a smaller sign, 'circular walk'). Pass the village hall then, unless you want to visit the 13th-century church, take the next road left, over a bridge. This used to be the old railway line that connected Taunton and Barnstaple, but looking over the bridge you will only see back gardens. Just after the bridge, as the road bends left, take a blue-signed bridleway on the right. Head uphill and then through a gate on the right; now keep the hedge on your left. At a wood, bear right as the bridleway joins a wider track. Look out for a lake through the trees on your right, before the track goes through a muddy patch and drops downhill to a stone barn. Coming to an isolated stone house (1hr5mins, [2]), turn left on to a minor road. In three or four minutes arrive back at the Dulverton road; turn right and pass some houses before crossing the bridge at Exebridge, over the river Exe which has now joined up with the Barle.



The Toll House

If you can resist the Anchor Inn, continue along the road and come to an early 19th century octagonal toll house, latterly used as a holiday cottage (1hr15mins, [3]). Keep to the left of the building and cross the main A396 to continue along a narrow lane. This can be quite busy so keep an eye out for traffic; it is also the steepest part of the walk. Head uphill for ten minutes or so, then turn right on a track beneath some power lines (signposted as the Exe Valley Way footpath, [4]) and go through a field gate. Head towards a white farmhouse, but before you reach it turn right to follow the well-marked footpath to come behind the farm. Leave the farm on the signposted path, roughly parallel with a smaller set of power lines. Where you have a choice of paths, take the left-hand option signposted Exe Valley Way (1hr50mins, [5]). In the next field, Bampton comes into view; head diagonally across the field towards it. The path is well-signposted; look out for some tall conifers and follow the path up into them, then over a stile and along the left-hand edge of the field. Go through a gate, downhill on a driveway, then turn left on a narrow lane (2hr5mins, [6]). This takes you back into Bampton. To walk down to the River Bathern, turn left, walk into the centre, through the 'no entry' road signs, then turn right into Brook Street (2hr15mins).

**Alternative walk: Dulverton and Brushford circular** (● 4.6 miles, ascents and descents of 165 metres). Start as for the main walk, following the instructions to Brushford. Pass the village hall but ignore the turning on the left. Two minutes or so later, immediately before Ashleigh



House, turn left on a footpath, through a metal gate and up some steps and then right on the track of the old railway. Go over a road bridge then in seven or eight minutes take a path to the right signposted 'circular walk'. Turn left on the road, go over a bridge, then about five minutes later (before coming to a house set back from the road) turn right over a stile to join a footpath (the distance to Dulverton is now less than two miles, not four as shown). Keep to the left of the trees and head upwards; as you come into the open head for the far right-hand corner of the field, turn right as signposted, then left behind the buildings. Go into the next field, then keep parallel with the left-hand boundary. In the next

field follow the path around to the left. Go through the gate, and head diagonally right to the telegraph pole in the centre of the field. Bear slightly right at it, heading not quite for the lower corner of the field: there is a gap in front of the first tree. At this point continue on a rough lane towards farm buildings; this is Combe. Go through the gate, then head left around the farmhouse, keeping close to its hedge. Make for the barns at the far end of the field; go through a gate here to join a narrow road. As the road levels out, come to a viewpoint above Dulverton. Go into the field heading diagonally left as signposted. This brings you to another footpath sign; keep left here along the edge of the woods, then go over a stile to join a footpath next to a fence. Turn right when you meet a road. This descends steeply to the B3222; take the footpath on the other side, which descends to the River Barle. Turn right over the bridge and walk back into Dulverton.

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