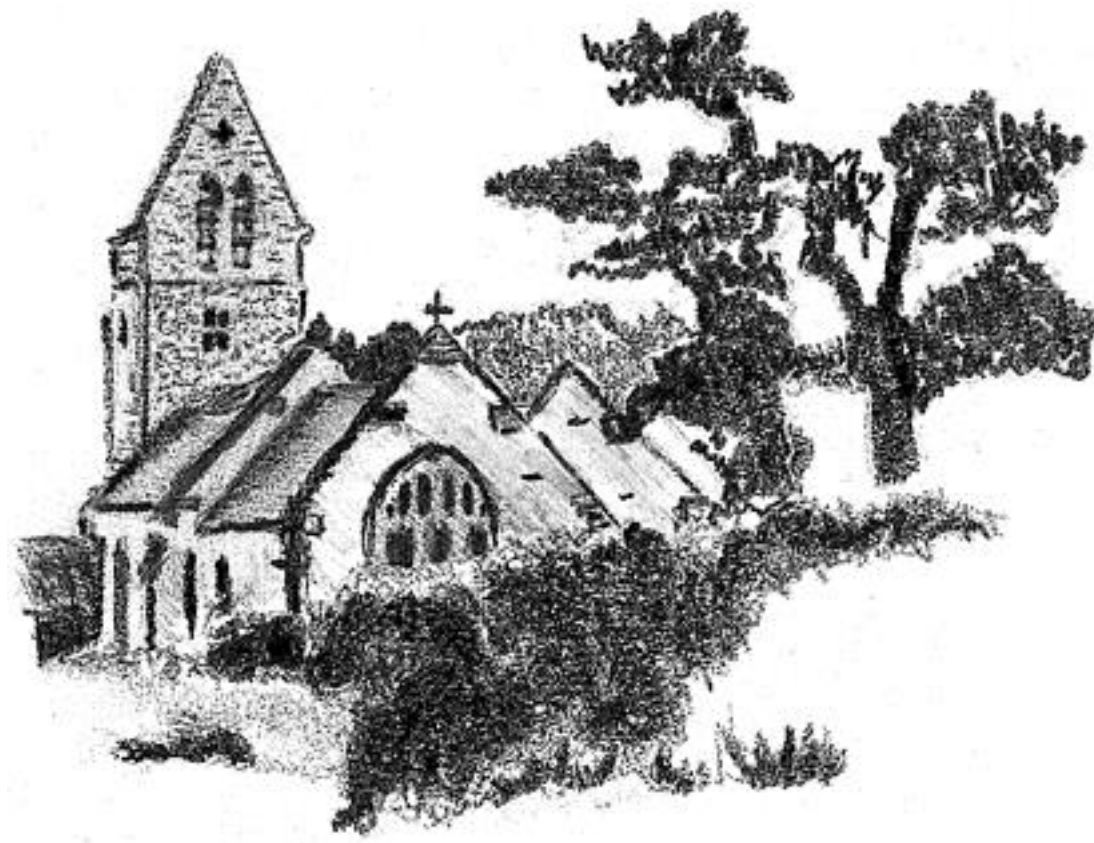


LUXBOROUGH to LYNTON: 26 MILES

EXMOOR, DOONE VALLEY AND THE CLEAVES

The next stage will cover the **Exmoor National Park**, still a land of villages, with a lot more moorland and rivers in the second half. After crossing the bridge in **Luxborough** go up the road towards **Dunster**, passing **the Royal Oak** on your right. Just past the Inn, take a footpath on the left. A little further on, go over a stile, and then enter a field, keeping to the left-hand boundary. After a few hundred yards, go over a footbridge on the left, then turn right and carry on with the water on your right. Walk down here past a house. Keep right and close to the water. A little further there is a road; continue in the same direction. The road goes downhill and swings to the right. At this point, if you are going to **Churchdown** keep to the road. If not, take the footpath on the left, go over the stile, then straight ahead to the opposite boundary and over another stile. Follow the right hand boundary and go through a gate, then turn left on a well defined track. Continue a little way; the track swings to the right; follow it uphill for a short distance, then pass through a gate on the left and into a field.



Continue up the field (it is very steep here), keeping close to the right hand boundary. Look down the valley to the area that you have just covered, with **Churchdown** on the opposite side. Go through the gate at the top of the field. You will be climbing a slippery, stone-based track between beech hedges. Then come out into the open. Carry on in the same direction up the track. You will still be going up a hill, but not quite so steeply. As you walk on, there are a couple of gates ahead; take the first gate on the right. Just beyond this, the path splits. There is a signpost here to **Wheddon Cross**, ignore this. Go more or less

straight ahead, keeping close to the left hand boundary (the signpost you follow will say Luxborough, Charget).

Keep following the left hand boundary through two further gates, then pass through a hunting gate and follow the same boundary down approximately 200 yards and go through a gate on the left. Turn right, heading in the same direction up a short track and through a barrier. At this point there is a wireless station on your immediate left. Continue on the track until you reach the main road. Turn right, then almost immediately left through a gate and walk down the field through another two gates, keeping parallel to the right hand boundary. Coming down here and looking slightly to the left, you can see the moor you will be crossing. At the moment, the nearest stop is **Winsford**.

Once through the second gate, go over slightly to the right so that you meet the right hand boundary corner, where you pass through a gate into another field. Keep more or less on the same bearing, crossing diagonally to the very far corner. You should be heading towards a large clump of beech trees. On the right, in the very corner of the field, go through a gate and over a stream. After crossing the stream, walk straight ahead for approximately 200 yards, keeping parallel with the left hand field boundary, then head for the last large beech tree on the left. At this point, come in close to the left hand boundary and continue up the field. Pass through a gate and carry on in the same direction. At the end of this field there is another gate to go through, and you will find yourself on a road. Opposite there is a lane; walk straight down. Before doing so, look through a gate on your right. Weather permitting, **Dunkery Beacon** stands out quite plainly.

The lane continues for a good mile. As you carry on, it starts to drop down. There are some beech trees on the left and the lane then swings around a little bit. Stone Farm is on the left. This is an excellent lane to wander down. You can see all the country spread out in front of you, giving an idea of where you are going, and at the same time allowing you a rest from opening and closing gates, going over stiles and looking at the map. Continuing down, you reach a hard right hand swing in the lane, and a short while later a main road. Cross straight over the road on to the track opposite. A few yards down here, you will come to a stream and cross a footbridge. Once over, take the track to the right, going uphill. and continue under a canopy of various growth. When you reach a gate, go through and carry on the same way. The base of the track is rock, and slippery when wet.

Towards the end of the track there is a very hard left hand turn. Continue on to the top of the hill, with open ground on the left. Here is a good opportunity to rest. Walk on in the same direction - the path takes a slight right hand turn. You will come to a gate; go through it and continue straight on between two hedges, not diverting off this track at all. It will soon start to go downhill, with a sharp right hand turn at the end, taking you into a lane. The lane carries on for about half a mile, past a cricket field on the left.

You are now approaching **Winsford**, where accommodation may be found. With the lane levelling out now, and the hedge a bit lower, you can see **Winsford Church**. Pass over a bridge - underneath is the **River Exe**, which dominates this part of the walk. At the end of the lane, go straight over the road and continue, with the village cross on the left, and also the **Royal Oak inn**, a beautiful thatched building. Continue towards the church. (If you want to see the church take the first lane on your right. Orange hawkweed, or fox and cubs, flowers in the churchyard during July and August). Otherwise proceed with houses on either side. Ignore the footpath sign on your left, and continue for a further 60 yards to a gate and footpath sign on the right. Once through the gate, another 60 yards down the track, the path splits again. As an alternative, you can take the track on the right and more or less follow the river all the way to **Exford**, but the main route goes to the left via **Bye**

Common. This means quite a climb for half a mile but it is well worth it for the views at the top. The path drops down to the river a bit further on, so this way you can have the best of both worlds. Carry on up here, and after a short distance go through a hunting gate. Keep close to the left hand boundary. Look back at the view as you climb. Further on, pass through another hunting gate and immediately turn left. After a steep climb for a few yards, turn right into a field and walk in the same direction as before. There are magnificent views at the top. Levelling out now, with trees on the right and a field on the left. Go through two hunting gates, one straight ahead and then one immediately on the right. After the second, turn left amongst bracken. Continue along this ridge - you will find the climb has been well worth it.

Eventually pass through another hunting gate. Further on, drop down to a more major track, keeping in the same direction. Continue on through a gate and then go up a small slope and into a long field. Go along the field in a westerly direction making for a footpath sign, then start to bear right and drop down. You will descend fairly rapidly now, but carry on more or less in the same direction, through a gate and keep to the right hand boundary, then take the next gate on the right. Continue in the same direction, keeping close to the left hand boundary now. In front, or slightly to the right, there is a row of beech trees. Go through another gate and continue on a well-formed track, descending very quickly now down to the **River Exe**. On reaching the bottom of the track you will meet another track at the side of the river. Carry on in the same direction for a short way and cross the bridge on your right. Once across, continue straight on, then bear left on the track.

Continue, and go through some farm buildings known as **East Nethercott**. Once through the farm buildings, a track comes down from the right. Ignore it, and go straight on through a gate, across a stream and up to some more buildings. Don't go down to the house. Turn to the right a little and cut in between the farm buildings. Go through a gate, then bear right following the track through a series of gateways. Beyond this, it appears as though the path splits, but keep in a straight line and to the top track, the one slightly to the right. Follow this pleasant little path, with no more gates for a while. Eventually it will come out into the open. Carry on, then you will start to swing around to the right, through gorse and silver birch trees. Continue down the path, eventually going through a couple of gates. As you drop down to the next gate, notice the old stone bridge on the left. Once through this gate you will come to a junction, but walk straight on. Go between buildings known as **Lyncombe**. Once through the buildings pass through a gate. The track appears to go straight on, but don't take this; take the gate on your left, then turn right, keeping fairly close to the right hand boundary. It should be quite well way marked here.

After approximately 100 yards the path bends to the left, straight across the field. It can be quite boggy here. Enter a small neck of the field, keeping close to the right hand boundary. You will not go very far before you cross over a stile, then over a footbridge and a further stile. Have a rest here; you may see a kingfisher.

To move on - go straight over another stile into the field. Keep reasonably close to the river. The path swings to the right, and in the corner cross a small stream. Once over, carry on straight ahead, keeping close to the right hand boundary. At the end of the field, pass through a gate and continue on the footpath. It goes across the field, taking a right hand sweep into the corner. Go over the stile, swing round to the left and straight down the track, keeping close to the boundary on your right. At the end of this path, before the bridge, go through a gate on the right. Follow the river and go through another gate, then on a bit through a further gate into a car parking area and on to the road. You are at **Exford**, and in the heart of **Exmoor**. There is plenty of accommodation and food here, shops to stock up and a couple of pubs. To get to the Youth Hostel, turn left, cross the

bridge, bear left and left again. To continue on the main route, take the Porlock road, passing the Post Office on the right, and approximately 50 yards further on go up Combe Lane on your right.



The lane is fairly steep. Continue up here for approximately one mile, not diverting. There are tall hedges on either side. Eventually you will pass through a gate. There is now open ground on the left, with a beech hedge on the right. Go straight ahead through another gate. At the end of the next field there are a pair of gates. Ignore the one straight ahead and take the one on the right. Immediately turn left and continue along a bridle path. The country is open here, and to the right is **Dunkery Beacon**. At the end of this field, pass through a gate and immediately turn left on to a track. This does not go very far, before reaching a road. Turn left on the road (marked to Exford) and continue down here for a quarter of a mile. Eventually it will meet another road. Turn right on this one, walk up here for a few yards, and round a bend, then take the lane off to the left. It should be signposted to **Alderman's Barrow**. Carry on down here for two thirds of a mile. It is rather enclosed by beech hedges. After approximately half a mile, the view opens out a little and you can see the moor in front, then the lane comes to an end. Continue in the same direction on a well formed track.

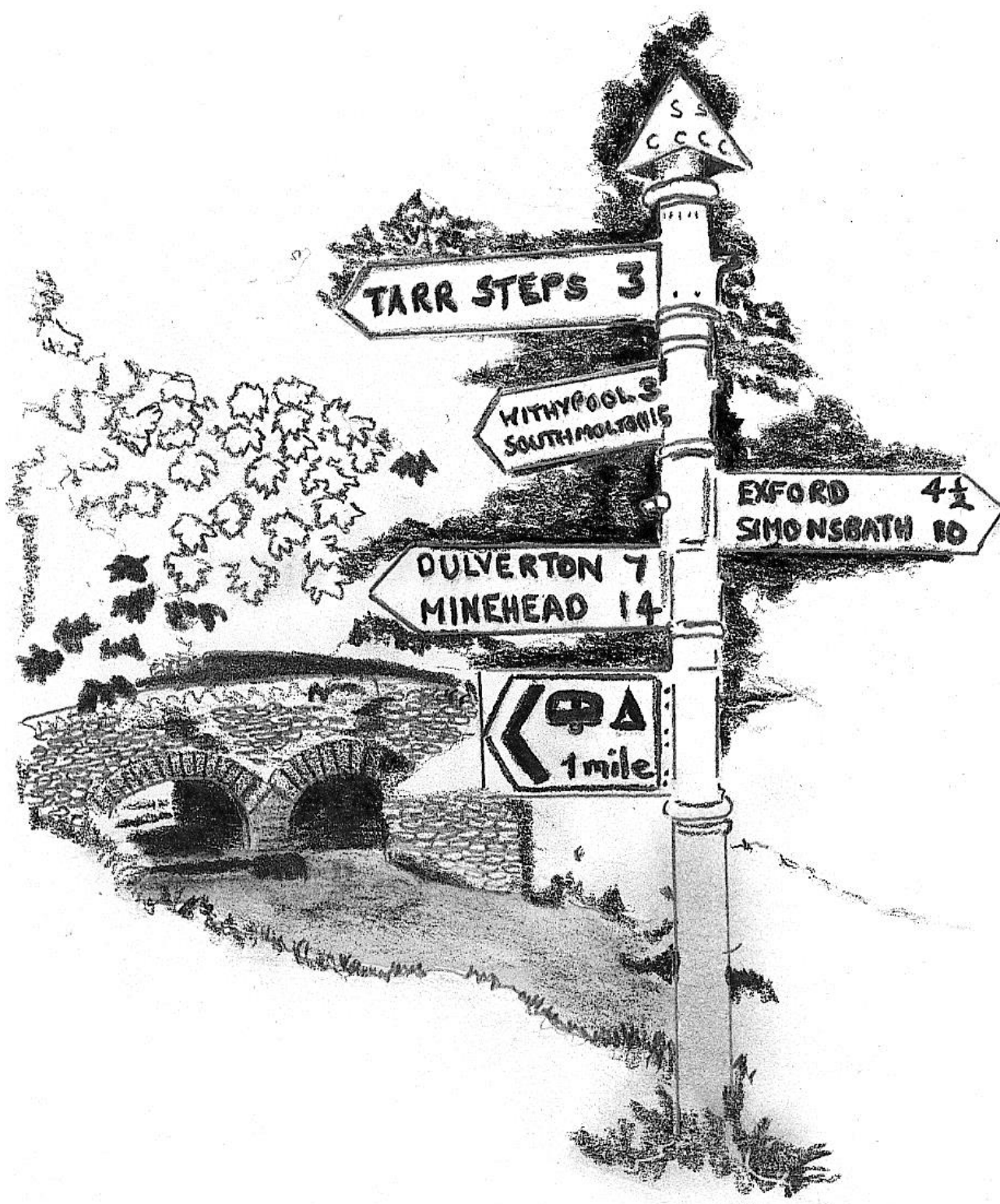
When the track ends, go through a gate, immediately turn left, keeping close to the left hand boundary. Continue in this general direction for approximately one mile, and you will reach a minor road. Go straight over and through a hunting gate. You are now travelling in a north-westerly direction into open moorland. There is no boundary to follow, and in bad weather the use of a compass is advisable, but the track is fairly well defined and you continue in the same direction. After a while the path starts to bend to the left a little and eventually it will come to a gate. Once through, turn right and walk down the track for about 100 yards, then through another gate. Turn immediately left and follow the track down with the fence on your left.

There will be some beech trees on the right at the aptly named **Larkbarrow**. Skylarks are in abundance here. Go through two gates, and at this point you have covered **90 miles from Bristol**.

Continue on the well defined path. It will reach a signpost and a gate. Pass through the gate and straight on. There is a line of beech trees on the right and then open moor on the left. Continue for a little way, reaching a gate and a signpost. Once through the gate, walk straight on towards the **Doone Valley**. There is a vast expanse of moorland in front of you, but you won't be crossing it. Further on, the track starts to bend to the right, and it comes to a hunting gate. Before you go through it, stop and look all around at a continuous horizon without road or car in sight.

When through the hunting gate, take a bearing slightly to the left, and follow the track down to the valley. At the bottom of a slope, go over a stream and then climb the slope at the other side. Proceed along the track, away from the water, then drop down a rocky path and there will be a footbridge below. Cross the footbridge, then go through a gate. Once through the gate, turn right and follow the path. As you go on downstream there are gentle hills on each side, covered with heather, and numerous rowan trees. You are now in **Devon**.

Further on, the path suddenly takes a left-hand turn and after a short distance it will cross another footbridge. On the other side, pass through a gate. There will be a signpost and a "crossroads" of paths. Go straight over, up the slope (signposted **Malmsmead**). After a short distance, turn right and continue down the river. You are now walking down the valley at a slightly higher level, with the river on your right. You may see some dippers. Drop down into some woodland. Cross a stream, turn right a bit, then the track goes down a rocky path, close to the water again. You now continue on a level path. Further on, there will be a few tall pines on your right, and the path will go through rhododendron bushes and oaks. As you come into the oaks, cross over another footbridge on the left and continue in the same direction. You will eventually pass through another gate, when coming out of the oaks into the open.



Carry on for a while, then dropping down the track you will see a footbridge on your right, going over the river to Cloud Farm, where you may get a cup of tea. Otherwise continue on, bearing to the left up to a gate, pass through the gate and go straight ahead on the track. You have now come away from the water, on a sort of ridge with very pleasant views. Continue for a while. The track then swings to the left and back on itself in a sort of "dog-leg". A little further on, it goes through a gate and on to a road. Go straight ahead in the same direction down to a junction. This is **Malmsmead**, where more refreshments are available. At the junction, turn right and go over the bridge. Follow the road straight ahead; for a brief moment you are back in **Somerset**. Continue along the road for approximately a quarter of a mile. On a right hand bend take a path which goes off to the left, passing

through a gateway. Follow on past a house on the right, through a gate, then drop down and go over a footbridge. Turn left, with the water on your left and a hillside of gorse on the right. Further on, go through a gate. Keep close to the river, going straight ahead over a stile.

Carry on for a few hundred yards then the track will bear to the right. This is steep. Further on, go through a hunting gate. Follow the track; it will bear left, winding down to a footbridge. Once over the bridge, bear left. The track will then arc right and go over a stile. Walk straight ahead on a well defined path, keeping close to the right hand boundary. You will start to climb up again, then go through a hunting gate and on the same way, still keeping to the right hand boundary.

Now you benefit from the climb with a good view of the valley, and the village of **Brendon**. Walk along the ridge and eventually drop down, bearing left, and go through a gate, then on a bit. The path will bend round the top of a combe, up a slope and pass through another gate, then gradually drop down, finally bending to the right, and then take a sharp left turn down to a stile and on to a road. Turn left and follow the road around to a junction. This is **Leeford**, where accommodation may be found. If you want refreshments, cross the bridge and turn right for the **inn at Brendon**. Otherwise go past the bridge and walk down about 50 yards to a track on the left. Continue along this track. The village of **Brendon** is on the other side of the river. You will soon pass through a gate and then between a house and an outbuilding.

A little further on you will find yourself walking on an extremely good path parallel to the river, sometimes near it and at other times above it, in an area owned by the National Trust. After a short distance there will be houses on the other side of the river at **Alderford**. Do not pass through the next gate, but bear right for a short distance up a slope and carry on in the same direction. A lot of these gates and footbridges are private, but this should be quite obvious to the walker, who should just keep to the main track. The woodland here is quite beautiful, mainly oak, with bilberries, ferns, holly and rhododendrons. The river flows over a bed of large rocks, forming quite deep pools. You will eventually go through a small gate. About half a mile distant from **Alderford** on the other side of the river there is the village of **Rockford with its inn**, accessible by a public bridge. There is approximately three miles river walking between **Leeford** and **Watersmeet**, and you continue on the same track all the way. Sometimes you are about 60 feet above the water, and then you drop down, but always in the same direction. The woodland changes from oak to beech, and there are plenty of mosses, lichens, liverworts and ferns.

Some of the ferns have adapted themselves to grow on the boughs and trunks of the trees. On higher ground heathers may be seen; on lower ground look into the river and see the trout - some quite large. Further on you will come to a small gate and stile, then drop down to a footbridge, but stay on the right hand side of the river. At one point you are on a pinnacle above the river, and way below is a preserved ruin - a quicklime kiln. You will now drop down quite steeply to the riverside again. You are approaching the end of the river walk and entering the area known as **Watersmeet**. The building here is **Watersmeet House**, where refreshments are available.



Just

past the House, across the bridge, is a diagram giving local information. Cross here, and a few yards to the right go over another bridge from which you will see the **Hoar oak Water** coming in via a quite spectacular waterfall. Bear right after crossing the second bridge, and up a hill, follow the footpath signs for **The Cleaves** and continue in a zigzag fashion starting in a series of short turns and carry on until you arrive at a road. Cross straight over the road and take the track opposite. Bear right, still going uphill. Towards the end, the track will swing sharply to the left, coming out into open ground, and straight ahead is another hill to be climbed. You are now at an Iron Age fort - **Myrtleberry Camp** - amidst bracken, bramble and heather, and some tormentil, with the hills known as **the Cleaves** ahead. Continue up the hill on a well-defined path, pausing frequently to look back at the views, which become better, the higher, you climb. When the ground starts to level out, you will come to a signpost. Go straight ahead, with a wood on the right, bracken on your left, and probably buzzards soaring above. You will soon come into the open. Look to the right now - you are at the sea. Down the valley, to the right and ahead, you will see **Lynmouth**. To its left is **Lynton Hill**. Out to sea, the coast of **Wales** may be seen - weather permitting. Continue along the level path on this fine ridge. After a short distance pass through a pair of hunting gates and carry on for about 40 yards. The path then takes a right-hand swing past a stone seat. Drop down, cross a stream and then climb up the

other side. Towards the top the ground levels out. Look to the right, down the valley. The oak woods are beautiful, especially in September, with a few tinges of autumn colour, and in summer they are even more spectacular, looking like green cotton wool.



To the right are **Foreland Point**, and the **Church at Countisbury**. Soon you will arrive at a signpost saying "Lynbridge". Take that direction, upward to the left. Carry on along a fairly level ridged path, with rowan and oak trees on the right. You are now nearing the end of the Bristol-Lynton section of the walk. As you go down the path, just before it swings to the left, take another look below you at **Lynmouth**, and **Lynton**, straight ahead on the opposite hill. Drop down quite steeply on the winding path, pass through a hunting gate, down some steps on the right, keeping to the well-defined path, and cross over a small stream. In summer there are foxgloves, rosebay willowherb, yellow poppies and St. John's wort. Continue to drop down rapidly, pass through the gate and over the bridge across the **River Lyn at Lynbridge**. Turn right after the bridge and go up the side of an inn, cross straight over the road into a lane opposite, bearing to the right. At the top of the lane is a three-pronged track. For **Lynton** continue down the right hand prong on a good path for approximately a quarter of a mile. At the junction, turn sharp right downhill and keep straight on, then up a few steps to the right to **Lynton Church**. You have now completed the **100 mile walk from Bristol**.

Walk at your own pace - one trip averaged 16 miles a day, but if you decide on 10 miles a day there should be accommodation en route.

You may decide to stop here. It is possible to catch a bus to **Barnstaple** for connections home by train or bus. Alternatively, you may wish to continue along the North Devon coastal path, firstly to **Ilfracombe** and then on to **Croyde Bay**, a distance of some thirty miles, nearly all on National Trust property. On this stretch one may have the good fortune to spot some seals. However the book will not detail this part, as there are already many good books written about it.

