

THE COASTAL PATH SECTION

LYNTON TO CROYDE BAY - THIRTY MILES OF ONE OF THE MOST DELIGHTFUL STRETCHES OF THE SOUTH WEST PENINSULAR PATH, NEARLY ALL NATIONAL TRUST PROPERTY, BROKEN ONLY BY THE TOWNS OF COMBE MARTIN AND ILFRACOMBE

(Ref: Ordnance Survey Map 180 or Explorer 139 and Leisure map No. 9.)

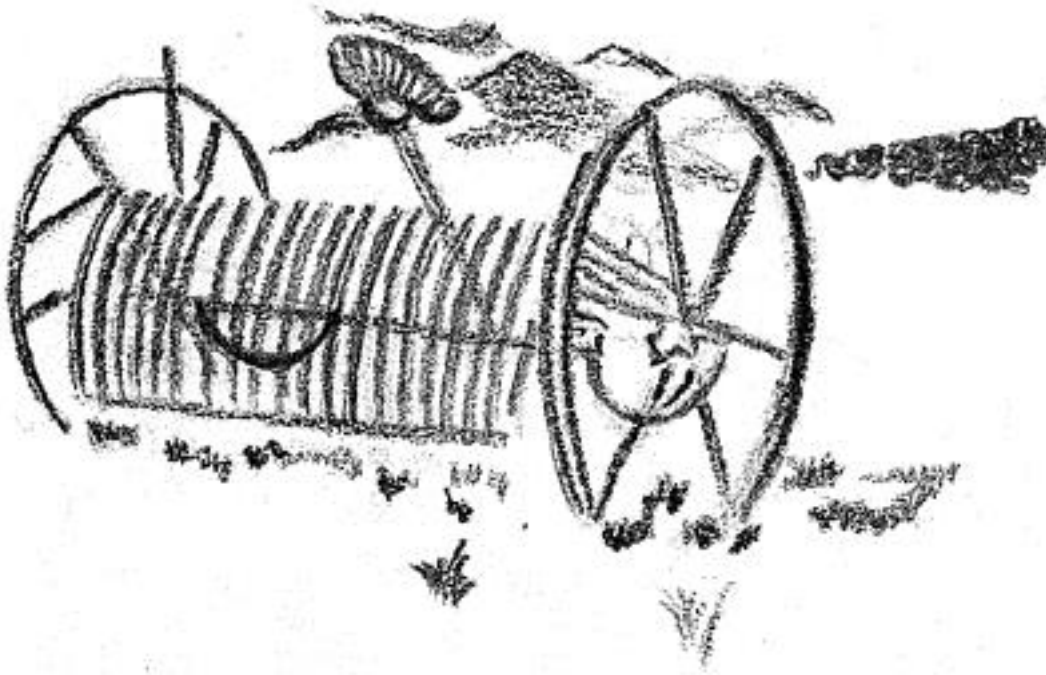
A pleasant walk, with completely contrasting landscapes to those you have just enjoyed from Bristol to Lynton. Many authors have already paid tribute to this magnificent section of the coastal path. You may like to cover the seventeen and a half miles from Lynton to Ilfracombe in one day, leaving a nice easy second day for the walk on to Croyde Bay. However, it is best to split the journey to suit individual needs.

For the coast path when leaving **Lynton Church**, continue up the hill a short way then turn right beside the old town hall, journeying on through the **Valley of Rocks** and eventually arriving at **Lee Abbey**.

From **Lee Abbey** one can look across **Lee Bay** to the right. Go on through oak woods above **Woody Bay**, arriving at **Highdeer Point**, a very high section of path in open ground. From here look back across superb views to **Foreland Point** or ahead to **Combe Martin Bay**. With **Heddons Mouth** below, drop down into the valley, arriving at a river where a little further on you go over a footbridge. Then brace yourself for a stiff climb to the cliff edges. Prior to the climb, refreshments may be taken at **Hunter's Inn** a half mile further upstream.

Having now covered about six miles from **Lynton**, for the next few miles you will go through open countryside before descending into **Sherrycombe Valley**. Cross over the footbridge and prepare yourself for another steep climb to the top of **Great Hangman Hill**. At the top there is a huge cairn and a viewpoint from where one can look back and slightly inland, picking out some of the major landmarks across **Exmoor**.

Drop down from **Great Hangman** on to **Little Hangman** and then into the harbour end of the town of **Combe Martin**, some twelve and a half miles from Lynton. Accommodation may easily be found in **Combe Martin**, with its two mile length of main street. You may prefer just to take refreshments here and continue the walk, so leave the town by the harbour end and up the hill to rejoin the coastal path to **Ilfracombe**. Some of the path tends to be near the main road, but before long you come to **Watermouth**, from where your route will be determined by the height of the tide. Again the route becomes scenic, with a mile or two of small coves below.



On the outskirts of **Ilfracombe** you arrive at **Hele**, which has a working corn mill. At this point bear right off the main road. The coastal path will take you to the top of **Hillsborough**, so you get an excellent view of the town, then descend to the harbour.

Whether you decide to stop for lunch or stay the night, you are spoilt for choice, there are numerous good eating and resting places.

Having sampled the delights of **Ilfracombe**, leave the town by working your way round the sea wall towards **Torrs Point**. With a distance of some twelve and a half miles from Ilfracombe to Croyde Bay, you now continue on National Trust ground with spectacular scenery, passing several bays and points. After three miles you arrive at the village of **Lee**. Accommodation may be available here, though since it is only a small village advance booking is recommended. A mile further on from **Lee**, you arrive at **Bull Point** with its lighthouse. Another mile will bring you to **Morte Point** - if luck is in this is a likely place to spot seals.

Try to avoid the many side tracks in this area, keeping as near to the sea as is safe, in order to take full advantage of some excellent scenery.

Continue on from **Morte Point** towards **Woolacombe**, with its inviting two mile stretch of golden sand. At this point give your boots a rest - They have carried you some 125 miles from Bristol. Let the sea and sand pamper your feet for the next two miles before rebooting for the coastal path again, and on to **Baggy Point**.

Once around the point, you gradually drop down into **Croyde Bay** where, sadly, you have come to the end of your walk from Bristol. I'm sure you will want to show your appreciation to the National Trust for its tremendous work in preserving the natural beauties of the coast. Please give generously at the NT box and refresh yourself with a pot of tea from one of the hotels or beach shops.

The Way Home

You may wish to carry on walking the **South West Coastal path**. After all there is another 450 miles to Poole Harbour. Alternatively you may wish to have a rest and go on home. A local bus from Croyde Bay, or a little further on from Croyde Bridge will take you to Barnstaple. Stay the night, or travel home the same day. **Barnstaple** is well served by trains and buses.

The local buses can be few and far between, so check the timetables. There are information offices at major towns along the coast.

On the way back and if travelling by bus, look out for some of the main landmarks such as the ridges of the Quantock and Polden Hills. Watch out for the little footbridge over the M5 then the Mendip Hills. Lastly the Clifton Suspension Bridge.

