



# Views with clotted cream

*Towards Foreland Point, from above Lyn Cleave*

Follow Steve Davison

on a roller-coaster walk

through some of Exmoor's

stunning hill and coastal scenery

**EXMOOR IS** Britain's second smallest National Park. It straddles West Somerset and North Devon and consists of a high undulating plateau with steep wooded valleys. To the north of the region the plateau gives way a series of dramatic cliffs that tumble down towards the Bristol Channel.

This route takes you through a combination of wooded valleys, open heath and rugged coastal scenery. It's an area that is said to have inspired the poet Coleridge to write *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner* while walking the cliffs.

The route starts from Hillsford Bridge and follows the final section of the Two Moors Way (including part of the Tarka Trail) to the picturesque village of Lynmouth. You would never know it from looking at the village, but Lynmouth suffered a night of disaster on August 15, 1952, when, after exceptionally heavy rain, there was a fresh cloud burst on Exmoor. The torrential rain, channelled by the steep river valleys, formed a 40ft wall of

water that swept through the village; 34 people lost their lives.

From Lynmouth the route follows the Lyn River for a while before climbing to join the South West Coast path. This long distance route, Britain's longest, starts at Minehead and stretches round the coast of Devon, Cornwall and Dorset for 594 miles to finish at Poole Harbour.

The walk then descends to the East Lyn River valley and follows the rushing river to Watersmeet House. Now owned by the National Trust, the house was built in 1832 as a fishing lodge by the Reverend W. S. Halliday, and does a great trade in clotted cream teas. Luckily the finish is a just gentle walk away.

## THE WALK

From the NT car park at Hillsford Bridge walk down to the A39, cross over (care required) and follow the road uphill, keeping to the grass verge. Where the road turns sharply left, continue straight on past an NT sign and footpath sign for Lynmouth. Go

through the gate and along a broad track, gently rising through the open woodland, passing the remains of Myrtleberry South Iron Age settlement on the left. Shortly after, take the left-hand fork curving round the hill following the signs for Lynton and Lynmouth. Pass through two gates above Myrtleberry Cleave and continue along the path following the top edge of the valley. On the way there is a steep descent and ascent to cross a stream. Ignore the path off to the left. At the next path junction turn right, following the path in the direction of Lynmouth, passing the rocky outcrop of Oxen Tor and descending through the woods of Lyn Cleave. Eventually the path continues between high stone walls, curving between the houses to reach Lynmouth.

Cross the A39 and walk through the car park to reach the East Lyn River. Turn right and follow the river upstream, crossing it at the first footbridge, to continue along the left-hand side. After leaving the tarred road the route follows the path through the steep sided, thickly wooded valley. Ignore the first path up to the left and at the next fork take the path signposted Arnold's Linhay and Countisbury. The path takes its name from the local word for a cattle

Lynmouth, Porlock Bay and Hurstone Point. Further north is the coast of South Wales and inland the wooded valleys and open moors of Exmoor.

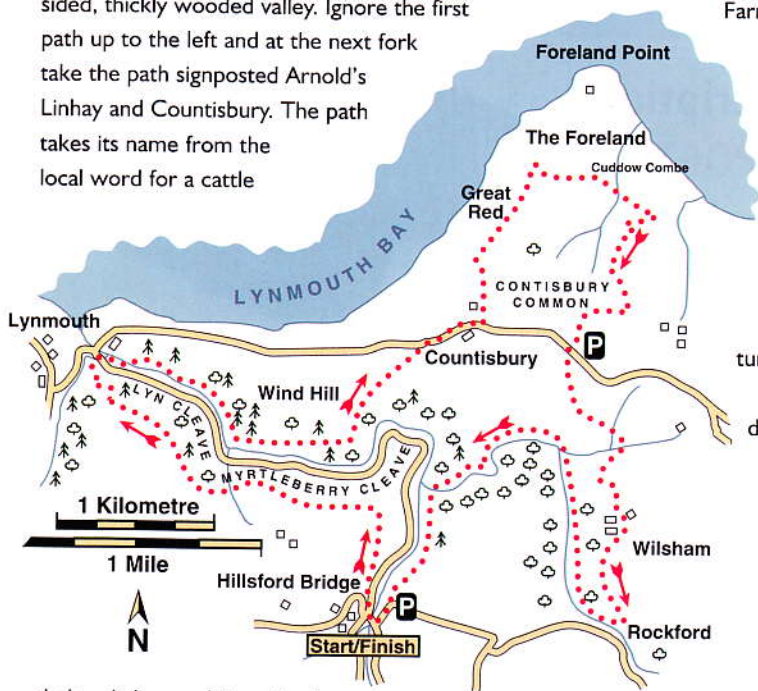
Descend to the wall and T-junction, turning left to keep the wall and fence on the right and follow a sign for the Coast Path and Lighthouse. At the next sign turn right along the side of Butter Hill, with The Foreland – Devon's most northerly point – on the left. Descend steeply into the scree-filled Coddow Combe.

At the tarred road turn right following the coastal path sign and keep to the tarred road towards Barna Barrow. At the junction with the path turn left following signs to Barna Barrow car park. Walk through the car park to reach the A39, turn right for a short distance and then cross over to turn sharply left down a signed path across Holden Head. Descend to cross a stream and then ascend to contour round the hillside to join a track to the hamlet of Wilsham. Bear slightly left and follow the signed path through Wilsham

Farm, contouring round the fields to reach Wilsham Wood. Enter the wood and follow the narrow path down to the East Lyn River at Rockford. On

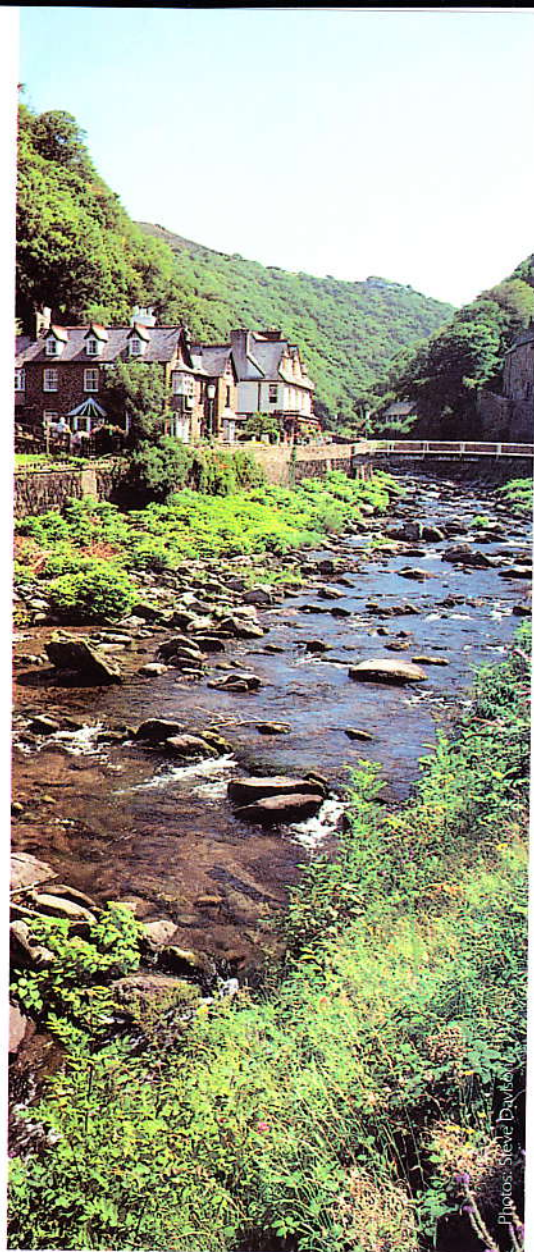
reaching the river turn left, following the fisherman's path downstream through Scrip Wood and Trilly Wood. Here the river is at its most dramatic as it roars over falls and through rocky channels.

At Watersmeet House – an ideal place for a well-earned clotted cream tea – the East Lyn river is joined by Hoar Oak Water. From the house cross the footbridge over the East Lyn river and just before the next footbridge turn left along a path signposted for Hillsford Bridge and Waterfall viewpoint, climbing in a series of steps. Keep close to Hoar Oak Water for 800 yards, passing the waterfall viewpoint on the way. Through the gate, turn right along the road (B3223) and cross the bridge to bear left back to the car park.



shelter, linhay, and Arnold, who was a 19th century transport contractor, who pastured his mules in paddocks high in the woods.

The path climbs through Wester Wood to reach the A39. Turn right along the road towards Countisbury, turn left along the lane through the churchyard and pass to the left of St John's church up to a stile. Cross over and bear slightly right to the corner of the wall and continue to the trig point on the top of Butter Hill (991ft/302m). From here there are magnificent all-round views of Lynton and



The East Lyn River, Lynmouth

## Exmoor

10 miles/16km

**Start/finish:** National Trust car park at Hillsford Bridge at junction of A39 and B3223 (GR: SS 155411)

**Distance:** 10 miles/16km

**Map:** Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Explorer sheet 9 (Exmoor); Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 Landranger sheet 180 (Barnstaple & Ilfracombe, Lynton & Bradford)

**Transport:** nearest main-line rail station is Taunton or Barnstaple (08457 484950); buses from Taunton to Lynmouth (01823 272033); Traveline (0870 608 2608)

**Refreshments:** Watersmeet House (01598 753348)

**Accommodation:** Lynton Youth Hostel (01598 753237), choice of B&Bs in surrounding villages

**Information:** Lynton (01598 752225) or Taunton (01823 336344)