

Walk No. 16 A Walk in Hope

Hope Cove, in the far south of the County, is one of most attractive settlements on the whole of the South West Coast Path in Devon. It actually consists of two coves, Inner Hope and Outer Hope, the latter being the larger of the two and the location of most of the settlement's facilities.

Hope Cove is sheltered from southerly storms by the neighbouring headland known as Bolt Tail. This walk starts by going eastwards along a ridge line parallel to the south coast before climbing up to the cliffs and finishing by rounding Bolt Tail. The starting point is the Sun Bay Inn at Inner Hope, the terminus bus stop for buses from Kingsbridge; there is also a small car park here, as well as a larger one at Outer Hope.

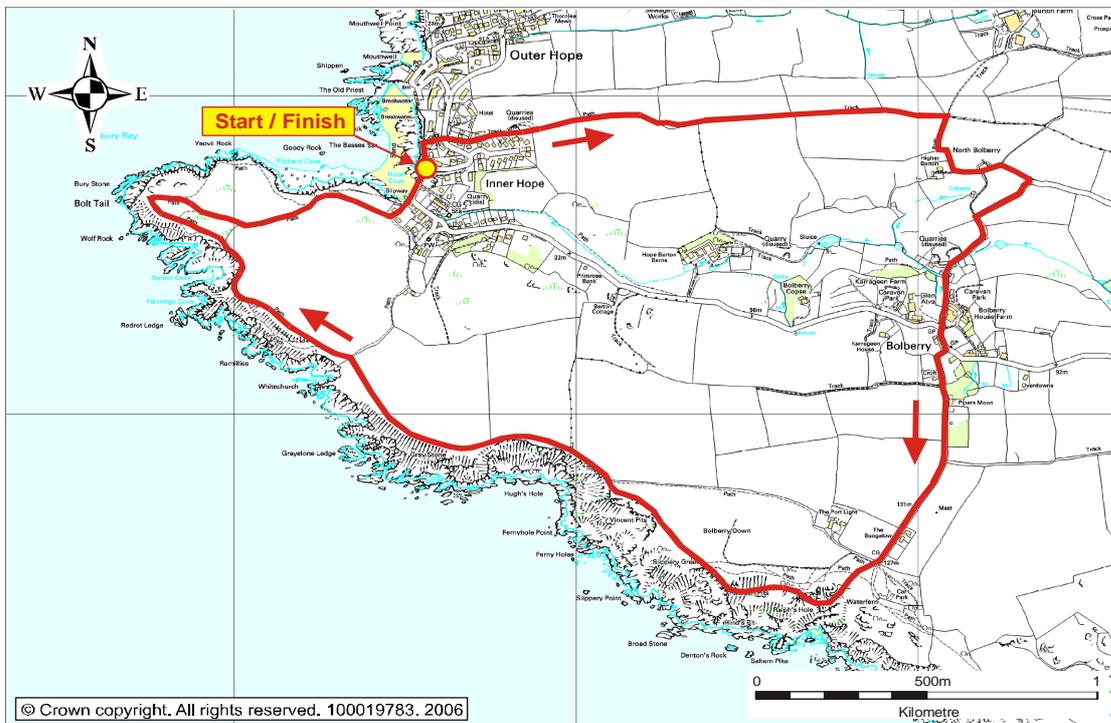
Fact File

Hope Cove is served by buses from Kingsbridge; there are generally three or four buses a day Mondays - Saturdays. For timetable details contact Traveline on 0870 608 5531 or visit www.traveline.org.uk.

Walk Length: 8km/5 miles: 2 short climbs and one longer one of approximately 60m/200ft; 3 stiles.

Facilities: Hope Cove (Outer Hope) - pubs, refreshments, toilets, shop; Bolberry Down - pub, car park.

The Walk



From the bus stop outside the Sun Bay Inn, take the Coast Path to the right, uphill on the no through road (signposted to Outer Hope). At the junction of paths at the top of the hill, turn right, inland, signposted to Galmpton.

(If you are starting from the main part of the village at Outer Hope, follow the Coast Path past the toilets going towards Bolt Tail until you reach the footpath junction at the top of the hill then turn left.)

At the path junction there is a superb view over Outer Hope. The first record of a settlement here is dated 1281. In later years it became known for both fishing and smuggling. It is now an attractive small holiday village, also much used by divers.

At the top of the steps, cross the road and continue up the track opposite. The track leads into a field. Continue ahead along the field edge, hedge to your right.

As the path rises, the village of Galmpton comes into view ahead to the left. The distinctive shape of the tower of Galmpton church is especially prominent. This was built in the 1860's to replace the original parish church, which is at the hamlet of South Huish in the next valley beyond Galmpton. At that time the medieval church there was found to be beyond repair and was dismantled, the replacement church being built in the parish's largest village. The original 14th century font was moved to the new church. The dismantled church is now a romantic ruin. The parish still carries the original name of South Huish.

Views down the coast also open up from this vantage point. Burgh Island is especially clear and beyond, the coast sweeps round to Stoke Point, the Mew Stone off Wembury behind and, in the distance, Rame Head in Cornwall, the shape of the chapel on its highest point just visible on a clear day.

After a couple of fields the path becomes a track again. The path continues for about 1.25km/0.75 miles, through a total of five fields, and then arrives at a gate where there is a gravelled surface at a junction of paths. Turn right here, through a second gate and go down the edge of the field, hedge on the left. In the bottom left-hand corner cross a stile. Go diagonally left to the bottom left-hand corner of this next small field and cross another stile.

Descend alongside a small lawn to a track. Turn left here. Continue ahead on a narrow lane to a junction (Broadmoor on the signpost). Turn right here, signposted to Bolberry and Hope Cove. Follow this little lane down to the hamlet at Bolberry.

Bolberry is an old settlement, mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 as Boltesberia. It seems to get its name from "the Bolt", the name given by the Saxons to the stretch of land still today distinguished by the two headlands of Bolt Head and Bolt Tail. Presumably, it resembled a bolt as seen from the sea. Over the years, "Boltesberia", or the fortification on the Bolt, became simplified to Bolberry.

At the junction continue ahead and left. A little way further on is another junction. Turn right here, signposted Bolberry Down, and follow this lane up a long and fairly steep hill.

This hill can be testing on a hot day, but at the top you have reached the highest point on the walk.

At the top, on the right is the Port Light Inn. This was originally the club house of a pre-war golf club here. Later, it became part of a World War II RAF radio station. There are still radio masts here, now part of a navigational signal system.

Go ahead into the car park at Bolberry Down, then turn right onto the Coast Path, waymarked with the acorn symbol to Hope Cove.

This stretch of the Coast Path gives easy, level walking, in company with the sight and sound of the sea. Skylarks are common here and will almost certainly be heard, if not seen.

In a while the path begins to descend off Bolberry Down towards the headland of Bolt Tail. Views ahead down the coast now open up, Rame Head, the Mew Stone, Burgh Island and the villages of Bigbury and Thurlestone all coming into view. As views over Hope Cove appear on the right, prominent in the bay beyond is the holed stone which gives the village of Thurlestone its name (“thirl” is the Old English word for a hole).

At the next stile continue ahead, signposted Coast Path. For a short cut you can take the path downhill to the right. This takes you back directly to Inner Hope.

As the Coast Path goes out to the headland of Bolt Tail, it crosses the distinctive line of an earth bank. Bolt Tail is the site of a late Iron Age cliff “castle”, where the prominent peninsula was fortified by a rampart built to defend it on the landward side. It has been tentatively dated to around 200AD. It gives superb views.

From the end of Bolt Tail, follow the Coast Path along the northern side of the headland, back towards Hope Cove. Follow the path off the headland down through a short wooded section to arrive at Inner Hope by the old lifeboat station.

The lifeboat station dates from 1875 and is surprisingly ornate considering its practical use. Look at the commemorative plaque on the wall.

Now walk up the road behind the cove to return to the Sun Bay Inn.

You may wish to look at the old village of Inner Hope, a little way up the lane on the right. This consists of a very picturesque array of cottages set around a square. This, incidentally, is where the short cut path mentioned earlier arrives.

If you wish to go to Outer Hope from the Sun Bay Inn, continue up the Coast Path, past the inland turn taken at the start of the walk and carry on down to the main part of the village (toilets, pubs, shops, cafe).

Further Information

For more information about the South West Coast Path including descriptions of over 60 walks, visit the official website, www.nationaltrail.co.uk/southwestcoastpath.

A number of guidebooks are available, including the annual guide published by the South West Coast Path Association, price £8 and available locally. Alternatively, it may be obtained from Discover Devon Information Service, Westacott Road, Barnstaple EX32 8AW, telephone 0870 6085531, price £7.50 including p. and p. (cheques payable to Devon County Council). Quote reference DP33.

For information on the wider network of walking routes in Devon, obtain the free leaflet "Discover Devon - Walking" from local Tourist Information Centres or from the above address. Alternatively, visit the website www.discoverdevon.com, which has all the walks information and an order form.

OS maps for this walk:

Landranger (1:50,000 scale) no. 202, Torbay and South Dartmoor.

Explorer (1:25,000 scale) no. OL20 South Devon.