

Walk No. 42 A Coastal Carriage Drive

The River Yealm reaches the sea at a beautiful estuary a little way to the east of Plymouth. It is a popular boat trip from Plymouth, referred to by the boatmen's advertising as the "Fjord of the West". Although a little fanciful, and geographically inaccurate, this description does do justice to the quite steep-sided entrance to the estuary and the superb landscape which results.

A little way up the estuary, on a side creek, lie the twin villages of Newton Ferrers and Noss Mayo. The latter of these is a good centre for walks exploring the south side of the Yealm Estuary and the adjacent coastline. This circular walk is based in the village and locally is well-known and very popular, since not only does it afford both estuary and coastal scenery but also has no steep gradients. This is largely due to the fact that the section of the South West Coast Path followed here is an old carriage drive and therefore well graded throughout its length.

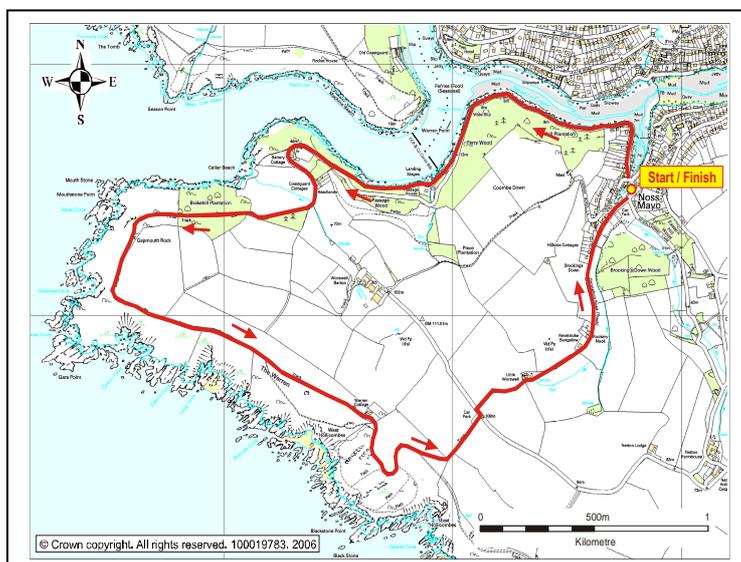
Fact File

Noss Mayo is served by a bus route from Plymouth approximately every two hours Monday-Saturday. For timetable details call Traveline on 0870 608 2 608 or visit www.traveline.org.uk. There is a small car park in the village adjacent to the bus stop. There is another car park, provided by the National Trust, on the route just behind the coast.

Walk Length: 8 km/5 miles; there are no stiles and no steep climbs; most of the route is suitable for those pushing the more robust sort of buggy.

Facilities: Noss Mayo has two pubs and public toilets, car park and buses; there is a car park near Little Worswell.

The Walk



From the bus stop and car park on the southern edge of the village walk down the lane to the village centre.

The village was once more important than it is now, and a market was established here in 1286. It was regarded as a chartered borough by the 14th century but gradually declined in importance.

Walk past the Village Hall and the Tilly Institute to Passage Road, which continues on the left hand side of the creek.

The Village Hall dates from 1839 and was built as a chapel. It was later used as the village school. On the wall is a thermometer and barometer, which might be useful if the weather looks a little uncertain. The Tilly Institute was built as the village school and schoolmaster's house and dates from around 1850.

Opposite the Institute is access to Noss Creek, with its tidal car parking. Noss Creek leads into the larger Newton Creek and on the opposite side of this creek may be seen Noss Mayo's twin village of Newton Ferrers.

Walk along Passage Road, passing the back of the Ship Inn. The lane then continues alongside Newton Creek.

There are good views over the water to Newton Ferrers from here.

Keep on the lane as it enters a woodland area, still following closely above Newton Creek.

After a while notice the footpath coming up from the right, signed to the Ferry. This is the Coast Path from Wembury and Plymouth, using the Ferry. Our walk now follows the Coast Path eastwards. The Ferry generally operates summer only. It actually operates three ways, between the Noss Mayo, Newton Ferrers and Wembury shores.

Newton Creek has become quite wide by here, and at this point it joins the main course of the River Yealm to help form the Yealm Estuary.

Continue along the lane a little further, until a fork is reached. Take the right hand, narrower route here, alongside what is now the River Yealm. By some houses the lane reduces in width and becomes a footpath. Follow this path.

This is the original Yealm Ferry point. Notice the ferry tolls shown on the board on the house on the left.

The footpath enters woodland and then climbs gradually to arrive back at the lane.

For those who prefer, for example those pushing buggies, it is possible, if rather less scenic, to follow the lane the whole way. For this route, bear left at the earlier fork.

Continue ahead on the lane passing a National Trust information board, the lane becoming a slightly rougher track. Pass Battery Cottage [on a former gun position], then more cottages to pass some coastguard cottages.

There are superb views from here over the mouth of the Yealm to the Mew Stone offshore, Wembury Point and, in the distance, Rame Head on the far side of Plymouth Sound.

Pass through the gate, still on the track, into woodland. After passing through another gate the path emerges high on the cliff, above the mouth of the Yealm. This is known as Mouthstone Point.

There are some strategically placed seats here and they give splendid views down the coast. Opposite is Wembury Church, once important as a landmark for shipping. Beyond is the now disused naval gunnery station at Wembury Point and off the headland is the Mew Stone. It is owned by the Ministry of Defence, and was once used as a prison. On the far side of Plymouth Sound can be seen the settlements of Cawsand and Kingsand, once divided between Devon and Cornwall when Devon had a little enclave of land on the far side of the Sound. Rame Head, with its chapel landmark, is prominent to the left and if the day is clear the Cornish coast may be seen receding into the distance.

Keep following the path as it rounds Mouthstone Point and continues along the coast.

This shows off the old carriage drive to its advantage. It was built in the 1800s for the Lord of the Manor at Noss Mayo, Edward Baring of the banking family who became Lord Revelstoke. Its building provided winter employment for local fishermen and, when completed, allowed Lord Revelstoke to take distinguished guests on a superbly panoramic carriage ride around his estate.

Out to sea will be seen the Eddystone Lighthouse, 14 miles/22 km offshore. If it is clear enough the stump of the former lighthouse alongside may be visible. The earlier lighthouse is now on Plymouth Hoe, where it is known as Smeaton's Tower after its builder.

Continue along the Coast Path and carriage drive to arrive at Warren Cottage. The path leaves the drive for a short section to avoid the cottage garden. However, for wheelchairs or buggies, it is permitted to follow the drive through the garden.

Warren Cottage was used as a lunch place for carriage-folk being taken on their drive. At other times it was also used as the cottage of the warrener, this length of coast being used as a rabbit warren in the 19th century. The rabbits were effectively farmed for their meat and fur. Some of the stone walls passed along the coast here are the remains of the warren walls, built to keep the rabbits on the warren.

After Warren Cottage the path, gravelled here, bears to the left. The Coast Path then leaves the gravel track to follow the cliffs to the right,

while our walk continues on the gravel track inland to a National Trust car park. Go through the car park to a lane.

This spot gives excellent views inland to the southern slopes of Dartmoor on the skyline ahead.

Turn left on reaching the lane, then almost immediately right on the public footpath following the farm drive. This drive descends past the house at Little Worswell and then continues downhill, occasionally a little roughly, until it becomes a surfaced lane. It then enters the village of Noss Mayo past the car park and bus stop to complete the circuit.

Further Information

For further details of the South West Coast Path, an annual guide including an accommodation list is published by the South West Coast Path Association, price £6. It may also be obtained from the Discover Devon Holiday Line, Westacott Road, Barnstaple, EX32 8AW, telephone 0870 608 5531, price £7.50 including postage and packing. Quote reference DP33 and make any cheques payable to Devon County Council.

There is also a National Trust leaflet “Circular Walks between Wembury Bay and Ayrmer Cove” available from NT outlets price £0.75.

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 address above. Alternatively, there are details on the website www.discoverdevon.com.

OS maps for the walk:

Landranger [1:50,000 scale] No. 201 Plymouth and Launceston
Explorer: [1:25,000 scale] No. 0L20 South Devon