

## Walk No. 45 An Exeter Green Semi-Circle

An Exeter attraction that should perhaps be better known is the Exeter Green Circle. This is a twelve-mile walk around the city with something for everyone, and a walk which includes some surprisingly rural stretches. Because of its location there are always many cut-out points from where it is possible to get a bus back to the city centre. In addition, it provides a fascinating diversion for long distance walkers on the Exe Valley Way, the 45-mile trail which links the Exe Estuary with the river's headwaters high on Exmoor, and which passes through the city.

The walk described here follows the Exeter Green Circle around half the city, on the western side of the Exe; this green semi-circle is linked by using the Exe Valley Way alongside the Exeter Canal and River Exe. The Green Circle is comprehensively waymarked in both directions.

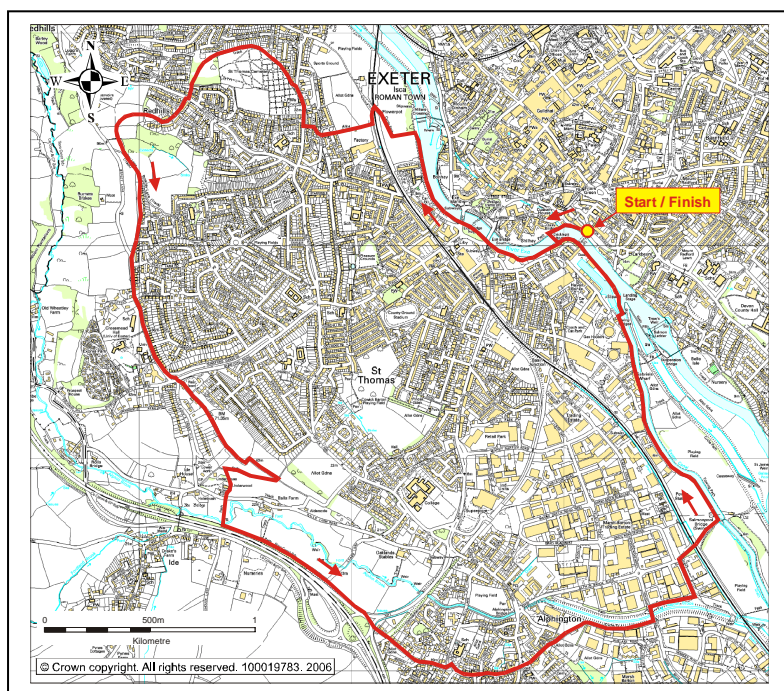
### Fact File

Exeter is at the hub of transport facilities in Devon and is also served by national coach and rail connections. The starting point for the walk is Exeter Quay which, as well as being walkable from the city centre, is also served by local bus route G. Bus timetable details are available by calling 0870 608 2 608 or visiting [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk). For train information contact 08457 484950.

Walk length: 11km/6.75 miles; there are seven stiles, but all are very low, one-step stiles; one long steady climb of 80m/260 feet.

Facilities: Exeter Quay has all facilities; shop at Little John's Cross; shop and pubs at Alphington; buses to city centre from Exwick Cemetery, Little John's Cross and Alphington.

## The Walk



The walk starts at Exeter Quay.

There was almost certainly some sort of quay here in Roman times, but its present form largely dates from the late 1500s. It was much improved in the 1830s, when the imposing warehouses were built. At one end is the old Custom House, dating from 1681 and said to be the first brick

building in Exeter. Nearby is the shed of the old fish market which was erected in the late 19th century.

**Walk past the fish market shed and cross the wooden footbridge.**

This footbridge crosses one of the leats which was used as power for the industrial premises which were found nearby in medieval and later times. Next to the footbridge are former wine warehouses of the 1870's and 1890's.

**Immediately afterwards cross the large suspension bridge over the River Exe.**

This, known as Cricklepit Bridge, was built in 1988 to link the Quay with the old canal basin.

**On the far side of the river turn right, alongside the River Exe.**

This is the route of the Exe Valley Way. A little way along the path passes the Malt House pub. There is a record of this building as the "new brewery" in 1792. It was used as a malthouse from approximately 1890 until 1952.

**Keep on the riverside path past Gervase Avenue and under the two Exe Bridges.**

Gervase Avenue derives its name from Nicholas and Walter Gervase, father and son of the late 1100's and early 1200's and who were behind the building of the first, medieval, Exe Bridge around 1200. Although demolished in 1778 part of it remains, together with its associated St.

Edmunds Chapel. The tower of the chapel can be seen over to the right between the two modern bridges. The current bridges were completed in 1978.

**Follow the walkway as it rises away from the river to the end of a footbridge.**

The footbridge over to the right, with its distinctive mill-wheel, is the Miller's Bridge. Dating from 2002, it forms part of the Exeter Green Circle and is also part of Exeter's cycle network. It links to the Mill on the Exe pub, seen through the trees. This is named as Bonhay Mills in a 1587 map of Exeter.

The walk joins the Green Circle here - look out for the distinctive green arrows.

**Turn left opposite the footbridge and follow the tarmac path across the sports fields. At the far side bear right and walk under the railway line.**

This is the main railway line to Torquay, Plymouth and Cornwall, part of Brunel's great venture.

**Immediately after passing under the railway turn sharp back to the left. A short way further on turn right, towards the allotments entrance. Follow the path as it turns left then right to arrive at a residential area. Turn right along the road and then past some bollards and left to Lakelands Drive. Go right at the top and follow this road to the left to reach a main road - Exwick Road. Turn right and cross Exwick Road at the refuge. Continue along the road, passing the entrance to Exwick Cemetery then take the next turning left, a narrow lane called Foxhayes Road.**

Exwick Cemetery was established in 1877 as the burial ground for the western side of the city when St. Thomas churchyard was no longer able to cope.

The settlement of Exwick has a long history, with records dating back to the Domesday Book, and it included the hamlet of Foxhayes, giving its name to the road. However, Exwick has expanded greatly over the last 20-30 years so it is now an extensive suburb. There are buses to the city centre from Exwick Road.

**Continue ahead as the lane becomes a footpath. At a grassy area the path forks. Bear left and climb, continuing up some steps to a children's play area. Walk around the edge of the play area and on to a road. Cross this and continue up the road opposite, Antonine Crescent. Go to the end then cross the stile ahead on the right and into a field. Walk up ahead and bear right to the brow of the hill to some seats and a viewfinder.**

This spot gives a superb view over the city. The cathedral is easily picked out and, to the left, Debenham's building. Left again, and a little nearer, is the distinctive spire of St. Michael's church at Mount Dinham. The line of the Exe Valley can be seen further to the left, the buildings of Exeter University overlooking it.

**Go down to the path along the bottom of the hill and continue ahead through the gap in the hedge and over a couple of stiles to another field. Walk ahead and uphill and at the brow turn left through a squeeze stile. Follow the path which bears right and then the clear green lane to the left. Leave the track at some steps on the right and emerge at the end of a suburban road. Keep ahead on this - Nadder Park Road - and continue when it is joined by Barley Lane until arriving at a main road.**

This is Little John's Cross - there are buses back to the city centre from here. It was once an important junction. Barley Lane is on the line of a prehistoric ridgeway and the main road here, Dunsford Hill, was the main road between Exeter and Dartmoor and later, until 1970, was used as the main road to Cornwall. The granite cross can be seen on the opposite side of the road, next to the shop and part at least dates to the 15th century. The name derives from the local family the Littlejohns who owned land here in the 1400's.

**Cross the main road to Little John's Cross Hill and bear left up the narrow Hambeer Lane.**

The lane becomes a track following a ridge, again on the line of a prehistoric trackway, the continuation of the Barley Lane trackway. On the right is the valley of the Alphin Brook. The noise of the traffic is from the A30, the modern road to Okehampton and Cornwall which follows the valley. When it was built in 1974 there was much controversy over its siting through what was a quiet and unspoiled area. Through a gap in the trees can be seen the village of Ide.

**Follow Hambeer Lane as far as a "crossroads" of tracks. Turn right here, downhill into the valley of the Alphin Brook. Shortly after passing through a kissing gate take the path which goes off to the left, downhill to the valley floor. At the bottom cross the road then go over the stile and cross the field to the far side. Follow the path to the right then cross the stile on the left and go left again to follow the path alongside the A30.**

Over to the left can be seen Ball's Farm. This gets its name from its owners John and William Bolle, recorded in 1228.

**Keep ahead when the path joins a surfaced lane, then bear right after a kissing gate on a grassy track. Keep on until the path ends at a large roundabout. Carefully cross the access roads at the refuge and turn right then very soon afterwards left on a pleasant quiet lane.**

This is Ide Lane, once the main link between the neighbouring villages of Ide and Alphington. It retains some attractive old cottages, mostly from the 19th century.

**At the junction turn right - still Ide Lane - and follow to the end of the road.**

The walk has now reached Alphington, another potential bus cut-out point. This historic village was only absorbed into Exeter in the 20th century, and retains many pockets of semi-rural charm. Until the 1970s it was on the main road to Plymouth.

**Cross the main road to the war memorial and then on to Clapperbrook Lane. Turn down this lane.**

This was Alphington's access to the Exe and its marshes and some of this old character remains.

**Continue ahead on the tarmac path when the lane ends.**

Over to the left is the Alphin Brook, the same stream which cut the attractive valley at Ide earlier in the walk. The old Clapperbrook Lane would have led to a clapper bridge - one of stone slabs - over the Alphin Brook.

**Cross the Alphin Brook at the road bridge and on the far side cross the road and follow the tarmac path on alongside the Brook [or use the underpass]. Continue on the path to the left away from the stream and on to the end of the road. Turn right to cross the railway line and arrive at the Exeter Canal.**

The Exeter Green Circle now crosses the bridge to continue its circling of Exeter on the eastern side. This walk leaves the Green Circle here to follow the Exe Valley Way back to the Quay.

**Turn left alongside the canal.**

Exeter Canal was built in the 1560's, one of the earliest in England and the first to use pound locks. Built under the supervision of John Trew, it was an attempt to maintain Exeter's maritime trade after the building of weirs across the Exe by the Courtenay family at Countess Wear in the medieval period. The canal was widened and improved in the 1830s.

**Follow the towpath alongside the canal until it arrives at the swing bridge over the entrance to the canal basin. Turn right over the bridge and immediately left, walking alongside the Exe.**

The canal basin and its warehouses date from the 1830's when the canal was considerably improved and Exeter Quay also rebuilt.

Soon the path is opposite the Quay. Return to the Quay on Butt's Ferry or retrace your earlier steps over Cricklepit Bridge.

### Further Information

A free information pack on the Exeter Green Circle is available at local Tourist Information Centres. The total walk is divided into five lengths, each with its own leaflet. This walk follows two of the lengths, the Redhills Walk and the Alphin Brook Walk.

An information booklet on the Exe Valley Way is available at local Tourist Information Centres price £1. This may also be obtained from the Discover Devon Information Line, Westacott Road, Barnstaple, EX32 8YR, telephone 0870 608 5531, price £1.50 including postage and packing [quote reference DP14 and make cheques payable to Devon County Council].

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

OS maps for this walk:

Explorer [1:25,000 scale]: No 114 Exeter and the Exe Valley  
Landranger [1:50,000 scale]: no 192 Exeter and Sidmouth