

Walk No. 53 The East Devon Way and the “Most Rebellious Town in Devon”

The East Devon Way is a 40 mile (64 km) route which runs parallel to, and inland of, the coast of East Devon between Exmouth and Lyme Regis. It passes through a quiet countryside and a variety of towns, villages and smaller settlements. Towards its eastern end it goes through Colyton, one of the larger settlements on its route, although still a small, compact and very attractive little place.

This walk is based on Colyton, circling to the south of the town across valleys and high land between, and then uses the East Devon Way to return to the town alongside the charming River Coly.

Fact File

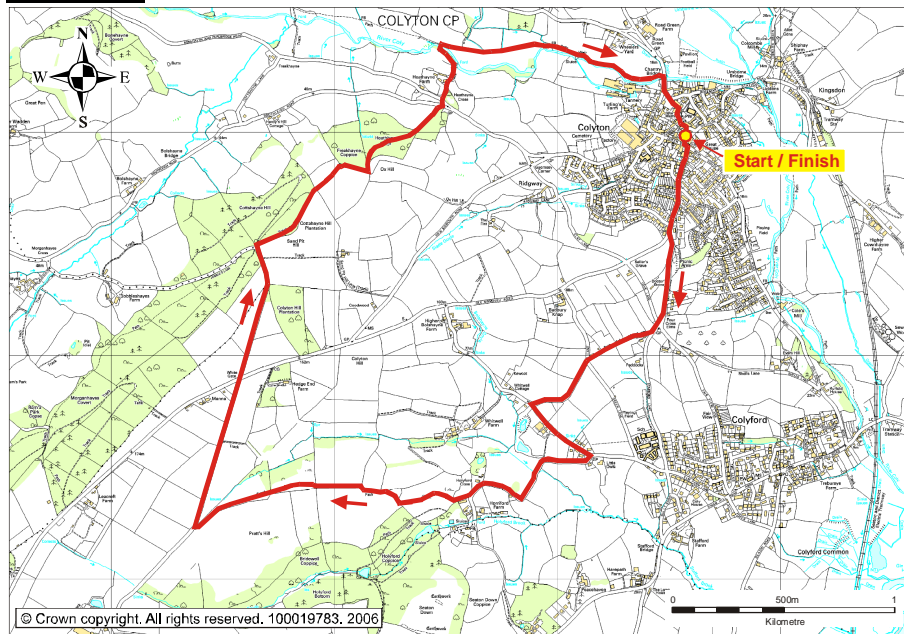
Colyton is served by a regular bus service from Honiton and Seaton, as well as further afield from Taunton, and a less regular service to and from Exeter. For details of the bus services and timetables contact Traveline on 0870 608 2 608 or visit www.traveline.org.uk.

Colyton is also fortunate in having the unique public transport facility of the Seaton Tramway. This provides a scenic and unusual link to and from Seaton on the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. Trams run most of the year - for details contact 01297 20375 or visit www.tram.co.uk

Walk Length: 8km/5 miles; 2 stiles; 2 steady but not especially steep climbs, of 30m/100 feet and 80m/250 feet.

Facilities: Colyton has shops, pubs and tearooms, as well as a public car park in Dolphin Street; there is a café and souvenir shop at the tramway station. There are no facilities on the length of the walk.

The Walk



Start the walk in the Market Square in the centre of the little town, outside the Colcombe Castle pub.

Buses to Colyton stop in the Market Square, which is immediately adjacent to the car park. Visitors arriving at the tramway station should walk down the lane to the bridge across the river then keep left along Dolphin Street until arriving at the Market Square.

Go to the top of the square, past the library. Turn left then immediately right, into Hillhead.

Colyton has an early origin, being one of the first settlements established by the Saxons in Devon. The complex street pattern is almost certainly of Saxon origin. It was documented as “the most rebellious town in Devon” as it supplied more men in the Duke of Monmouth’s rebellion of 1685 than any other town. This was the last rebellion on English soil, and Colyton provided over 100 men for this uprising. However, following the rebellion’s failure at the Battle of Sedgemoor in Somerset, 14 Colyton men were hanged after Judge Jeffreys’ Bloody Assizes and 22 more were transported to the West Indies.

The road rises past some attractive old cottages, climbing quite steeply to a fork. Bear left along the more major road (signposted to Seaton).

A little way along this road is a picnic site giving superb views over the Axe Valley. On the hilltop opposite are some Iron Age hill forts, Boshill to the

left, above the village of Musbury, and Hawkesdown to the right, above Axmouth. Axe Cliff and the sea can be seen to the far right.

In Iron Age times this was a border land between the Durotriges of Dorset and the Dumnonii of Devon, which may account for the many hill forts in this area.

Leave the picnic site and continue up the road, now levelling out. Pass the Doctor's Stone (see the information plaque on this) and continue to a crossroads - Four Cross Elms. Continue ahead and shortly after the crossroads leave the road, following the public footpath along the track on the right, just before a house. Pass the stables and go through a series of kissing gates. These eventually lead to a track by a white bungalow. Go ahead to a narrow metalled road and turn left.

This length is quite high and gives some good views down to the estuary of the River Axe. From the lane the sea will be visible ahead and left.

Follow this lane to a junction. Turn left here, downhill.

The walk is now descending into the valley of the Holyford Brook, a tributary of the Axe.

At the next junction, Rhode, turn right along the narrow lane signed to Holyford. Follow this little lane as it swings left, right, then left again. At another left bend, by a stone bungalow on the right, leave this lane on a signed public bridleway along a clear track.

Away to the left of the lane, seen just before turning off, is Holyford Farmhouse. This very attractive building can trace its origins back to the 1500s.

At the end of the track go through the gate and follow the bridleway which continues uphill to the right.

The walk is now climbing out of the Holyford Brook Valley, back to higher land. The woodland in the valley can be seen away and down to the left. Some of this is relatively recent planting, but some is very ancient, and may even be remnant of the original "wildwood".

Go through the gate at the top and bear right, to follow the right-hand hedge then, at the field corner, follow the field edge round to the left. Keep alongside the hedge, still climbing steadily.

There are good views back into the Axe Valley (stopping to look gives the chance of a breather).

At the end go through the gate and ahead, the hedge now on the left.

This pleasant ridge-top path gives views to the left to the sea and, nearer, Seaton Water Tower, now used as a residence.

At the end the path reaches a minor lane. Go to the lane and turn right.

This long straight road probably dates from the time these heights were first enclosed as fields, probably in the 1700s. Previously this area would have been rough pasture or uncultivated.

Follow the straight road to the Colyton-Sidmouth road. Cross here (or use the seat first if needed) and continue on the track following straight ahead opposite. This track gradually loses its metalled surface and becomes narrower. At the very end it forks. Take the right fork along the edge of the woodland. At the junction keep right, on the track at the top of the wood.

On the left is the coniferous plantation of Sand Pit Hill. Like many coniferous woodlands it tends to be dark, quiet and still, with an almost forbidding atmosphere.

At the end of the wood turn right across the stile then immediately left through the gate and downhill alongside the hedge.

Ahead now is the Coly Valley. The Coly is another tributary of the River Axe, which it joins just above Axmouth. It gives its name to Colyton.

At the bottom of the field cross the stile and follow the path into the wood.

This is deciduous woodland and the atmosphere is quite different to than of the coniferous Sand Pit Hill earlier. It is lighter, more varied in appearance and usually full of birdsong. The dead wood alongside the path has been left as it forms an ideal habitat for wildlife.

The path descends through the wood and over more open areas of bracken and bramble - watch out for one muddy stretch near the bottom. At the bottom the path arrives at a minor lane. Go straight across, down the lane towards Heathayne Farm. At the farmhouse turn right through the gate and down the green lane.

The parish of Colyton is remarkable for the number of farms whose names end in “-hayne” or “-hayes”. These date to early medieval times when new settlements were being made in the countryside around here, the old word “haye” meaning “enclosure”. Many of these settlements became the homes of small local squires. The current Heathayne farmhouse dates from the 1500s, when it was built by one such squire as a “hall house”.

Go through the gate at the bottom to the River Coly. Turn left and follow the path over the footbridge. After crossing the river turn right, alongside the Coly.

The walk has now joined the route of the East Devon Way, on its journey from Exmouth to Lyme Regis. The route is waymarked with a foxglove symbol and mauve arrows.

Follow the East Devon Way alongside the Coly to arrive at Chantry Bridge on the edge of Colyton.

Chantry Bridge across the Coly was built in the 1700s. The nearby Chantry Cottage is older, from the 1600s.

Cross the bridge and fork left at Chantry Cottage along Vicarage Street.

Over to the left is the parish church. Parts date to Norman times. Most noteworthy is its lantern tower, almost appearing like part of a wedding cake. This is a very rare church feature from the 15th century.

Continue along Vicarage Street to arrive back at the Market Square.

On the left at the end of Vicarage Street is Old Church House, dated 1612. It was once used as the meeting place of Colyton's Council, the Feoffees, which was established in the 1500s and still meets today, now in the 20th century Town Hall.

The Market Square dates back to Colyton's days as an important centre. Its wealth was based on wool, cloth and lace as well as agriculture and it was said to be the fourth most important market town in Devon in the 1400s.

The car park is down Dolphin Street to the left. Visitors using the tram should continue on past the car park and follow the signs to return to the tramway station.

Further Information

For details of the East Devon Way, a guidebook is available in local bookshops and Tourist Information Centres price £4.95. It may also be obtained from the Discover Devon Information Service, Westacott Road, Barnstaple, EX32 8AW, telephone 0870 608 5531 price £6.45 including post and packing. Quote reference DP17 and make cheques payable to Devon County Council. There is also a free introductory leaflet on the East Devon Way available from the above address - quote reference DP103.

For information on the wider network of walking routes in Devon obtain the free brochure "Discover Devon - Walking" from local Tourist Information Centres or from the address above.

Information on the Devon walking network, including the East Devon Way, is also available at www.discoverdevon.com

OS maps for this walk:

Explorer (1:25,000 scale):	No. 116 Lyme Regis and Bridport
Landranger (1:50,000 scale):	No. 192 Exmouth and Sidmouth
	No. 193 Taunton and Lyme Regis