

## Walk No. 1 OVER THE HILL TO HOLDITCH

*Circular walk: Dyke Hill -> Holditch -> Dyke Hill*

About 2 ½ hours: Moderate to difficult going. Waterproof footwear advisable even in summer.

About 50 yards up Dyke Hill from the Spar Shop, opposite the Linkhay turning, you will see a footpath to the left. Take this path and walk down the lane alongside a small stream.

On reaching the lace factory our path is intersected by another and you must turn right along a shady lane which passes Hurtham Farm Nurseries and Greenend Farm. At the end of the lane is a road to the right, but our path veers off to the left between two high hedges. The path is known as River's Lane and at the bottom you will reach a bridle gate.

Go through the bridle gate, continue straight ahead with the hedge on your left, cross the concrete bridge over a small stream and still walking straight ahead cross a second concrete bridge with hand rails. Ahead you will see a kissing gate and the railway line. Go through the gate and across the railway line remembering to STOP LOOK AND LISTEN. Go through the second kissing gate and continue to the wooden bridge over the River Axe. You are now in Dorset.

Follow the track ahead up the incline to a metalled road. Turn right and follow the road passing some industrial units and the entrance to the thatched house known as the Grange and West Ford Mill. Take time to admire the views of the hamlet of Chilson Common and South Chard from a metal field gate on your right.

The road shortly turns into a track and you will see a metal field gate on your left and a Dorset County Council waymark. Go through the gate and continue straight ahead passing an oak tree on your right, across a small brook. Continue up the field passing to the left of the farm buildings. Stop to admire the views across the valley on your right. Go through the metal gate with the thatched West Ford Park Farm on your right and continue with the wooden fence on your right until you reach another metal gate.

Go through the gate and follow the hedge on your left to another metal gate and waymark indicating straight ahead, across a small stream. Continue to the far left hand corner of the field where you will find a stile and waymark (possibly hidden in the undergrowth). Note: It may be necessary to skirt the field at this point if the path is blocked by maize.

Cross the stile and sleeper bridge over a brook and go through the wooden gate on your left. Continue up the field to a double stile and waymark in the opposite corner. Cross the stiles and continue straight ahead to a metal gate and oak tree lined lane. Pause awhile to admire the glorious views of Tytherleigh and South Chard behind you.

Follow the lane which becomes a concrete drive through a courtyard adjacent to Chapel Thatch (formerly Holditch Farm), with Manor Farm on your left, to the metal road known as Holditch Lane.

At this point the more energetic walker may like to make a detour along quiet lanes with panoramic views. Take the metal road up the hill to your left and at the bend in the road carry straight on along a road marked 'unsuitable for large vehicles'. At the intersection of two tracks continue straight ahead until you reach a 'T' junction. Turn left and follow the road past School House Cottage. Admire the wooded valley of Thorncombe and the red sign-post to Hewood, the picturesque hamlet on your right. You will shortly reach a turning to your left signposted 'Holditch'. Take this road past Higher Holditch Farm on your left to rejoin the bend in the road and the 'unsuitable for large vehicles' sign. Follow the road down the hill back to Manor Farm.

Turn right down Holditch Lane, or if you have made the detour, continue down the hill, passing houses and a lane leading to Holditch Court. Just past the Axe Valley Alpines Nursery, take the field path on your right and walk up the field with the hedge on your right to a stile.

Cross the stile and bear left along a grassy lane which becomes a shady track. Cross the babbling brook and continue to a wooden field gate and waymark pointing up the field with the hedge on your right. Passing West Ford Park Farm on your right, bear left on to a stony lane to rejoin our walk at 5. Retrace your steps to Dyke Hill pausing to paddle at the small beach near the railway line.