

A Ramble to Black Aller Covert and back to Cadhay Bridge.

Map OS Explorer 115 – Exmouth & Sidmouth. 1:25000.

6.5 miles

Easy, level ground, wonderful riverside scenery, open views, apple orchards and free-range hens. AND a gem of a walk through the Covert. Follow a bit of the old rail line to Sidmouth Junction (Alright, Feniton!). Minimal road walking.



Park in the ample space opposite the Cadhay Bridge Farm, just outside Ottery St Mary (Grid Ref SY 0903960). From here, staying on the winding path, follow the river for almost a mile. At times the path takes you way above the river giving wonderful views whilst taking you through tangled roots and trunks of giant beech trees. In season, you can enjoy an abundance of flowers, ferns, and birds. Eventually, in sight of the weir and fine old bridge you meet a road. Beside the bridge is what would have been the level crossing keeper's cottage, on the old rail line (pre Beeching!) The route of the rail is visible, as is the site of the crossing gates.

Move left over the bridge and immediately right, over the stile and on to the Public Footpath. Soon look for the stile on your left. Over, bear right and soon the river meanders away to the right, leaving you to move forwards, rising up on to the old railway embankment. Take a moment to enjoy the view down the river and beyond. Keep an eye open as you wander along this now unused rail route for signs of the brick bridges that carried the line over culverts. There is almost an expectancy of having to stand aside for the old iron beast to chug its way past. What a journey it would have been.

You will come to a high, old bricked arch beyond which you will pass under a newer bridge carrying the old A30. Bear right along a narrow, almost secret path that wends its way between the old and new A30's. Noise on the left- quiet on the right! At the exit, bear left over the new A30 and carry on, leaving the noise behind, straight ahead along a wide open track, keeping the hedge on your right. Pass a couple of new windmills on your right. Follow the hedge round to your left and immediately move over the stile in the gap in the hedge. Follow the hedge around, passing – in the season- wonderful apple orchards which in turn are sheltering hundreds of very happy free roaming hens.

*L*eave the fields via the steps and stile beside the gas installation box out on to a minor road. Left, and at the corner right into Feniton. At the Nog Inn, bear left along the Talaton road for about 500 yds. and on the bend take the Public Footpath off left, through the metal gate (The sign is on the opposite side of the road!) Keep the hedge on your left and at the gate and stile move left. Follow the edge of the field round, passing a “communications tower “to pass left through a metal gate. Again keep the hedge on your left and at the wire fence follow it this side of the wire down to the Escot Estate concrete road, having passed between two huge firs. Right here along the road for about 300 yds. and then before the cottages, move left through the wide gate into the gem of the walk – Black Aller Wood or Covert. Aller is the older and alternative name for Alder. This is a truly delightful 1000 yds. of trees, bluebells, ferns, Magic ! At the end of the straight, bear right and come to a clearing from which you move left to a wooden kissing gate. Onwards to the metal gate to wander down to the river on a made up track. Under the bridge and round to Escot Church. Via a little gate, move to the right round the Church and reach the road using the long straight stony track.

*L*eft uphill at the road and with care cross on to the minor lane on the right. Right at the junction, winding downhill to just before the flood warning sign. Left here on to the Public Footpath. In winter an annoying puddle makes the first few yards of this path quite difficult but normally no problem. Follow the hedge on your left sparing a moment to capture the views then at the metal kissing gate bear right to the footbridge. Over here – what’s that little brick arch on the ground? – and move diagonally left over open pasture to meet the road. Left and back to your car, passing another crossing keeper’s cottage and the well preserved crossing gates.