

## *Shute Hill Beacon House.*

Map OS Explorer 116 – Lyme Regis and Bridport. 1:25000.

About 2½ hours. 4.5 miles

A pleasant fairly short and easy walk, but one that provides track and lane walking with loads of history thrown in. Some uphill but gentle and good ground.



**D**rive to Seaton Junction (GR SY247 900) via Shute leaving the A35 at Taunton Cross. *(Bit of History – Seaton Junction Station opened 1860 and named Colyton for Seaton. Later renamed Colyton Junction and later again Seaton Junction. Posed big problem for westbound trains stopping there as they then had a 6 mile gradient of 1/80 to the summit at Honiton Tunnel. Station closed in 1966).* Walk 200m down the road and, on the bend, take the Public Footpath off left over a stile.

**W**ander gently uphill keeping the hedge on your right. Pass a totally pointless stile and continue uphill, still keeping the hedge on your right to join a much better, stony track. Onwards and just before Woodland Farm look for the stile in the fence on your right. Move diagonally left and, dropping down look for a couple of metal kissing gate that get you over the track. (In reality, this last bit is just getting you round the farm!) So, over the track and moving diagonally right cross the drainage channel on the narrow plank bridge. Find the old wooden stile in front of you and for a short way enjoy the leafy track running uphill beside the woods – a wildlife conservation area (or is it a ploy to keep you on the track!). Left on the house drive and then right, passing the rather grand New Shute House. *(Bit more History - this house was built by Sir John de la Pole in about 1785 in the grounds of the Old Shute House, known as Shute Barton, and stayed in the family until 1926. Between 1933 and 1974 it was let out as a girls' school when it was sold to a developer and split into 8 freehold apartments.)*

**S**tay on the drive, passing the house on your right to emerge at Haddon Corner. Amazing views from the driveway and a wonderful leafy cross road junction at the corner. Wander to the left on Shute Road to arrive in about 300m at a small car parking area. Move right out of the car park, passing between two old wooden posts to meet a good forest track. Right here and potter slowly uphill enjoying the really lovely woodland canopy. Stay on this track curving left. At the fairly acute bend stay left and in open land and before you re- enter the trees look for the stone Shute Beacon House off to your right GR SY 2582 9746. Just before the trees a thin track leads you the few metres to the house. *(Nearly the final bit of history, honestly, the House is one of only two remaining in good condition in Devon. Culmstock is the other. It was built as part of the*

*beacon system in about 1567, is beehive shaped and has a flat roof. The beacon would possibly have been lit on that roof or in a metal basket on a pole on that roof. The beacon keeper stayed there but was allowed neither bed nor chair lest he fell asleep on duty. The duty being keeping a watchful eye on the coast. Much earlier on beacons were used for signalling around the country. In 1588 the Spanish Armada was the object of the watching)*

**W**ander back down your original track and at the acute corner take the track left (very faint yellow dot on the post) and stay on this good track bearing right to meet the road. Move just a very few metres left and then on to the Public Bridleway off right, Now, potter down a wonderful long woodland avenue to meet the road. Left here and join the Public Bridleway, bearing right at the sharp bend to stay on the Bridleway. Meet the Shute road and wander left along this quiet lane. At the sharp bend take the wide track straight ahead of you. Ignore the Public Footpath off left – wee bit of uphill – and on entering the woods drop downhill on a beautiful woodland track. You emerge on to the road beside Shute Barton, a National Trust gem. Might be worth checking opening times before your walk. *(The truly final bit of history – Shute Barton, originally known as Old Shute House in the 1780's is a unique mediaeval non-fortified manor house built in 1380. Now owned by the National Trust).*

**F**inally, mulling over all the history and beautiful scenery of the walk wander slowly left down the road, to the car.

Chris Harwood January 2019.