

## *A Trip along the Coly.*

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

About 2½ hours. 6.5 miles

**Note the new map -116!** Yes, bit of a drive to Colyton but has to be worth it. Could be the best walk yet. Easy grade. Magical walk along the River Coly, two long stunning stony tracks and views to die for – well, to enjoy. Can enjoy the café in very ancient Colyton.



**D**rive to Colyton, and park beside the ancient, listed, Chantry Bridge (GR 2448 9426) If in doubt, ask for directions once in the village square but roughly pass through the square and drop down to the right. Very narrow roads!

**F**rom here, with the River Coly on your left follow the East Devon Way which is very clearly marked and even sports a number of bench seats for weary travellers. At one point you will meet a drainage channel from the right but it can be crossed easily by a single plank or, for the wary, move along to the right by some oaks and use a small bridge. Stay by the river and find an interesting piece of river sculpture in the form of a large banked curve. Could be an old river course or deliberate river diversion. Follow it round to a small gate and bridge. Very soon find a ford and substantial metal footbridge. Stay on your course along the river. It's not possible to describe this beautiful walk adequately – flowers, fish, egrets, trees, meadows... Eventually the river takes a large curve and you will find yourself following a tributary off to the right. See a large farm on the opposite side. Just stay beside this tributary and you will emerge on to a lane via an old wooden kissing gate, beside a fine old stone bridge.

**R**ight here, sadly leaving the East Devon Way, and in about 500 yds. having passed Barritshayes, come to Lawdeshayne Farm. Take the first main entrance into the yard passing the pink farmhouse on your right. Follow the concrete track which very soon changes to a wide stony track. Never mind the lack of sign posting here, just enjoy this incredible track. Wide, dry, bathed in flowers and ferns and meandering uphill between rich hedgerows. And the views! Magic. Near the top on a bend at a very obvious fork, bear right and continue to enjoy this gem. At a clearing, beside a ruined building, bear left through a metal gate, uphill until at last you reach a minor road at Crookham Cross – no cross here!

*M*ove right down the road and take a moment to soak up the views from this ridge. In about 500yds, on a corner where the road starts to drop move right on to the stony track to the right. This is Downhayne Brake Road. Origin? This lane completes the magic. Follow it down to the minor road at Red Cross. No cross here, either! Left here then on the corner move right on to yet a bit more stony track. In about 50yds, at a triangular intersection, move on right, down the track. Stay on the main track to where it meets the made up lane. Right and then at the Public Highway bear left but almost immediately right on to the Bridleway. At the bottom, over the stile – or through the gate – and down to the river. At about 50 yds. before the river, at a hedge corner, bear left across the open pasture to eventually meet the river bank. (Probably easier to just get to and follow the river bank from the start). You will no doubt recognise this area from the start of your walk. Onwards to the old bridge and hopefully your car. Now it's time to sample the Colyton coffee and cakes.

Chris Harwood May 2018