

## *The Doone Valley, Exmoor.*

The Map OS Explorer OL9 - Exmoor. 1:25000.

Time: 5 – 6 hours

Grade: Moderate, but a long walk with short spells of steep uphill.



**S**tart near Dry Bridge on the B3223 Simonsbath to Lynmouth road, parking in one of a couple of small parking areas GR 759452. Take the track NE for about 1 Km then look for a clear path, at a junction of paths, off right signed “Doone Valley “ Follow the clear track ( little bit vague near the top ) and drop down gently to cross the small stream via a ford. Stay on the track to curve round and down to come into the Doone Valley beside the famous Badgworthy Water (Read the book!) and the ruins of a medieval village, The remains are signified by raised grass and stone humps but little else ! Follow the track ( signed “Malmsmead ) “round to the left rather than dropping down to the river .

**M**ove north, following the river through incredible scenery and the ever-likely fleeting appearance of deer. Note the lichen covered trees, rivulets and high moor across the river. Look out for the Richard Blackmore commemorative plaque. Eventually, on reaching the approach to Cloud Farm stay on the West side of the river , unless you want to check Cloud Farm for a cream tea but it doesn’t always seem to be open for custom !, and wander down to Malmsmead. Here, the Welcome Inn , Lorna Doone Farm and small shop . Well, worth a moment here to soak up the really beautiful surroundings. The ford, the foxgloves when out, the river – just magic.

**C**ross the river by the bridge that stands beside the attractive ford and after about 300 m – just after the old wooden hut ( ? Parish Hall ) on the left, move left down a track and over a footbridge. Then, up a long hill and North to County Gate car park but take it slowly and soak up the view back down into the valley. Toilets and, sometimes an ice-cream van! And a very welcome bus shelter if the weather demands it . Move NW out of the car park and along a narrow, slowly descending track, contouring Cosgate Hill. Stay on this track- it really is beautiful with views of vast oak forests in the South – all the way to Brendon. Move a few yards along the road and then back on to the track through the woods alongside the East Lyn river with wonderful pools and lichen covered rocks all the

way to Rockford. (If preferred, cross the bridge in Brendon and follow the quiet road to Rockford.)

**C**ross the river using the footbridge- maybe a photograph up and down the river- and bear left up the road away from the Inn, for about 200m looking for a faintly marked track off right up a bank and beside a stream. This is very steep, and very steamy and needs to be taken slowly! Follow the water up through the trees to meet the road. Move left up the hill and look for a high stile on the right, on a very acute bend in the road. Move up the field to a farm. Pass through the farm and look for a sign out on to the moor. Then follow the markers up, bearing right and round on the open moor, moving south, up to the trig point on Shilstone Hill. Move South again and back to the little car park wherein should reside your vehicle that you left some hours earlier.

Chris Harwood (Revised July 2015)