

## *The Fluxton Lanes.*

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

Time: About 2 hours. 4 miles

Short but very sweet.

Grade: Moderate. Two wonderful, long, sunken tracks. Open heath with incredible views. Some large puddles in very wet weather but these can be bypassed by careful use of the hedge banks.

**T**ake the Tipton St John / Budleigh Salterton road out of Ottery St Mary. Nearly opposite the school in Tipton St John turn right on the Venn Ottery road. Almost immediately after the Venn Ottery village sign and on a sharp left hand bend cross over up a narrow dead end lane and park suitably after the last house on the right. (Grid Reference 085918). Walk up the gently ascending lane.

**T**his lane is wide, scouring into the stony earth, with rich hedgerows and views back toward Ottery and the Sidmouth Gap. Ignoring bridleways off to the left and right stay on the main track which eventually meets a narrow surfaced road, and it's possible that it was itself part of the highway many years ago judging by the few remnants of tar macadam near its junction with the road. Move right up the hill, signposted to Aylesbeare, coming to a forest edge on your right. At this edge is a gateway into the forest, which is actually part of the Venn Ottery Common Nature Reserve. At the time of writing the common is being grazed by Exmoor and Dartmoor ponies and Galloway cattle as part of a heath management programme. Continue up the hill and near the brow of the hill, on the right, is a gateway and Public Footpath sign on the right guiding you on to the open heath. From this high vantage point you have wonderful views of the East Devon countryside. Follow the track in front, bearing slightly right and downhill and look out for the first yellow arrow signed track moving off and down to the right. Take this slowly descending path down into the wooded area. Drop down, following a signed footpath left and down some old wooden steps, through a wooden gate and over a small footbridge over a stream. Here you pass a sad looking cottage, little bit of TLC needed, – thoughts of Hansel and Gretel – and then up a cinder track to a better-surfaced track.

**R**ight along this one to the road. Move right down the road to a Y junction on a bend and here take the left lane –signed West Hill / Broad Oak. Stay on this woody lane for something over 500 metres and then on the sharp left-hand bend turn right on to an unmetalled road. Quickly past the short stretch of houses and buildings and out into the wonderful open countryside. Potter along this wide open track between fields and hedges BUT beware, in winter, the Puddles! No problem in summer and even in winter there are edges to scramble along so not really a problem. You have almost 1.5 km of this marvellous track but then with great views of Fluxton you drop steeply downhill to meet

another wide, stony track. Right on this, passing a house on your left. This is yet another rare sunken track. It can be a wee bit wet but again, up on the bank and off you go.

**Y**ou will emerge eventually from this utterly magic track beside some cottages and farm buildings and here curve left down to the small road. Cross the road with care and straight up the bridleway opposite, going straight up rather than left by the cottages. This is the final deeply water-etched, tunnelled lane that emerges on the track from whence the adventure started! Move left down the track and back to the vehicle.

Chris Harwood (Revised February 2017)