

## *The Naps Lane Circuit.*

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

Time: About 2½ hours – 6.4 miles

Grade: Easy walking with mostly incredible little green tracks and lanes covering riverbank, open heath and woodland.

**S**tart from small car park in Newton Poppleford (Grid Ref 085898). Return to Main Street; go right downhill to 1st road to the right (Millmoor Lane). Wander up here and on the bend look for Public Footpath in front of you and leading off right-somewhat concealed between hedges! Stay on this footpath, passing through a small gate, climbing up and following the left hand hedge on the edge of four consecutive fields (Caution! You know how hedges between fields can disappear to make fewer but bigger fields!) Take a moment to look down at the River Otter as it winds its way along below you. Eventually, look for a small wooden gate that leads to steps down through some trees to a small open pasture. Move right through this pasture to emerge on a lane. Left down the lane to join path along this side of the River Otter. (NOT over the bridge!)

**R**ecent storms have speeded up the ever-present erosion and at the time of writing debris shows the flood height reached. Follow the river for some 500 metres, before leaving it to climb up through some woods and up a short leafy track, having passed a dubious looking open tank, probably a rather ingenious domestic sewage plant! Pass through a wooden gate into open pasture and staying close to the hedge on your right wander on to pass through a metal gate on to a concrete farm road. Straight across on to a signed Public Footpath. Follow the hedge on your left and look very soon for a grassy, tunnelled track off to the right. This is only a short track but in the season it is lined with wild flowers and ferns. Emerge on a small road. This is Yonder Hill and a convenient seat at the junction allows you to soak up the wonderful views. Now, fully rested, follow the lane right to meet the main B3178 beside a huge beech – beware of the fast moving traffic. Cross over and move about 60 metres right, looking for the unmetalled road on your left.

**A**t last Naps Lane! Follow this lane for its full couple of kilometres enjoying each bit of it and its history. The land is part of the Clinton estate that has, in the season fields set with organic clover crop as potential silage. There are some obvious paths off to both left and right but stay straight on and emerge on to a small road beside a cottage. Move right down the road and then sharply diagonally back right at Hawkerland Cross. Move along here a little way when you will see a Public Bridleway signed off to the left. Stay on this track, climbing upwards gently and through some woodland to emerge at a small marker post on to the open heath of the Hawkerland Valley. This is wonderful open heath with

an abundance of wildlife and views back over Newton Poppleford – did you know what the word “popple” means? Stay on the obvious main track, passing a number of marker posts, and don’t wander off left or right on any of the small tracks until you reach a small car park beside the busy A3052. Another, somewhat decaying but very welcome wooden seat on which you can pretend to be surveying the incredible view whilst getting your breath back.

**S**traight across the main road and on to the good track into Aylesbeare Common Nature Reserve – this track is part of the East Devon Way. Follow this good track – almost a lane- down to the large house (Woolcombs) and here, about 50 m before the house, bear right on to a signposted path , Marker post No. 25, dropping downhill to a small bridge and stream. Then, uphill along a delightful sunken, leafy lane to meet a small road. See a beautiful house with a huge dove-cote. Move right, uphill, and pass Benchams Cottage and –behind high gates- Benchams. Here, move right through a wooden gate on to the open heath and follow the main wide track across wonderful open heath until you drop down to a small road meeting it at an acute corner. Travel left some distance to crossroads where you go straight across into Back Lane. In about 150 m look for a small footpath signposted off to the right and enjoy the back view of everyone’s gardens emerging at last over a small iron footbridge on to a small estate road. Right here to the main street of Newton Poppleford – and finally left down the road to your car. (Take the short cut up to the right of the Church to the car park)

Chris Harwood (Revised December 2016)