

The Venn Ottery Circuit.

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

Time: 1 – 1½ hours

Grade: Easy, may be muddy in couple of places. Wear Wellies in Winter



Drive from Ottery St Mary on Fluxton / Newton Poppleford Rd (Opposite Kings' School) to Tipton St John turning right to Venn Ottery just past the Church and before the school in Tipton. Drive very slowly for some way through Venn Ottery not very far after the left hand bend by the Parish noticeboard and look out for the signposted unmetalled road (Grid Ref 080911) leading off to the right.

Go along here and park in the lay-by on the left, just before the houses or in any other suitable space.. Walk up the lane, not turning left beside the cottage, and potter slowly along the deep track enjoying the rich hedgerows and banks. There may be a big puddle in Winter. If so, and if you don't have good wellies on, just back track a few yards to the corner and slip easily up the left hand bank into the field and follow the track from the safety of the field. Re-join track having passed the puddle ! Having climbed gently uphill the track meets another – an unmetalled road- and here we move left following what can

in winter be a wet (might be another deep puddle ! – use the field again) but still beautiful and varied route. It meanders up to and into a wonderful mixed forest, going left along and just inside the forest. Looking back before entering the wood there are excellent views across to East Hill and Beacon Hill on Harpford Common. If time permits, before bearing left into the wood, there is a glorious bridleway leading to the right into the wood which joins the Venn Ottery road and it's worth a potter along here as far as the road. It's a simple matter then to retrace your steps and continue along the forest track to the left. There are numerous ancient mossy banks and lush vegetation canopied by ancient oaks, birch and beech.

Eventually, at the narrow road, and passing what can be a wonderful wildlife pond on your right, turn left and move downhill to a gentle left hand curve in the road, and here at the “Benchams” house signr, take the lane slightly off right through the avenue of huge old trees, taking time to peek over the hedge at the old house and unique dovecote (pigeonnair) on the left. Stay on this lane and pass the thatched and boarded Benchams Cottage and bear to the right following the footpath signs on to Aylesbeare Common and skirting the grounds of Benchams itself . Now, follow the path through bracken and gorse but fairly carefully taking about 100 paces and on a very gentlr right hand curve look for a thin but clear unmarked path dropping down to the left towards the trees. The path meanders downhill through trees with open land through the trees to the left. Soon the path emerges at a track that leads ahead alongside open land toward old farm / nursery buildings and here we forsake the path, moving left up a small road. See remains of old Coach house sign on a gate.

Bear right and then left around the S-bend and on to the slightly wider road beside the thatched cottages. Right here, to amble down the hill and look carefully for the almost hidden unmetalled road sign just before the farm barns, leading off to the left. This is an exquisite lane and should be savoured before emerging at the cottage just above the lay-bay where hopefully your car awaits. Spare a moment to potter around the churchyard of St Gregory the Great Church and inside if it's open. There is little booklet for sale with all the history.