

Mid Devon
***Country Walks
and Villages***

MORCHARD BISHOP

Walk One - via FROST CROSS

An easy to moderate walk of 1½ hours

Walk Two - via FARTHING PARK

A moderate walk of 1½ hours



Relax...
It's Devonshire's Heartland
naturally

INTRODUCTION TO

The parish of Morchard Bishop

The parish of Morchard Bishop covers over 7000 acres of attractive Mid Devon countryside, rising to a height of over 558 feet (170 metres). The village lies 7 miles north west of Crediton, 2 miles east of the main A377 Exeter to Barnstaple road and offers extensive views of Dartmoor and Exmoor in the distance.

Morchard is named in the Domesday Book survey of 1086 as the manor of Morchet in the ownership of the Crown. The manor was valued at £4, having 40 acres of woodland, 2 acres of meadow land and land for eight ploughs. There were also eight villeins, two slaves, five cattle and forty sheep.

The place name 'Morchard' is of celtic origin meaning 'great' ('mor') 'wood' ('cel'), whilst in 1207 the manor became the property of the Bishop of Exeter – hence the second element of the village's name.

In 1831, the parish of Morchard Bishop had a population of some two thousand. One key to the village's active past history is its position on the old main road from Crediton through Chawleigh and on to Barnstaple (part of the old London-Exeter-Barnstaple coaching route). However in the 1820's the new A377 was constructed up the Taw Valley and village life began to change.



Fine row of thatched terraced cottages dating from the 18th century – the longest continuous run in Devon.

Nevertheless, White's Directory of 1850 still records Morchard Bishop as having *three inns, two watchmakers, two shoemakers, two machine makers, two blacksmiths, two wheelwrights, two drapers/grocers, a tallow chandler, a tailor, a tinner and glazier, a schoolmaster and a surgeon!* The village



15th century church of St. Mary.

A parish board, showing all local rights of way, is located on the wall of The London Inn in Church Street.

was also still the scene of a large sheep and cattle fair held on the Monday after the ninth of September.

Today the parish has a population of around 920 and remains lively and active. The village has a butcher, a hairdresser, two grocers, a post office and general stores as well as a former coaching inn called The London Inn. There is also a working forge.

Morchard Bishop retains many interesting buildings and a large area of the village has been designated a Conservation Area by Mid Devon District Council. The 15th century church of St. Mary has a beautiful interior and is a landmark for miles around due to its spectacular hilltop position. The village also has a fine row of thatched, terraced cottages dating from the 18th century which form the longest continuous run of thatch-roofed buildings in Devon and probably in England.

The walks described in this leaflet will take you past some of these features as well as outlying farms, many of which are of a great age. Walkers will also be able to follow part of the **Two Moors Way** for a short while as this long distance footpath between Ivybridge on Dartmoor and Lynmouth on Exmoor passes through the village.

WALK 1

FOOTPATHS – 14, 12, 9, 8, 4 and 1 on the parish board

OS MAP REFERENCE – OS Pathfinder Series
SS 60/70 1:25000

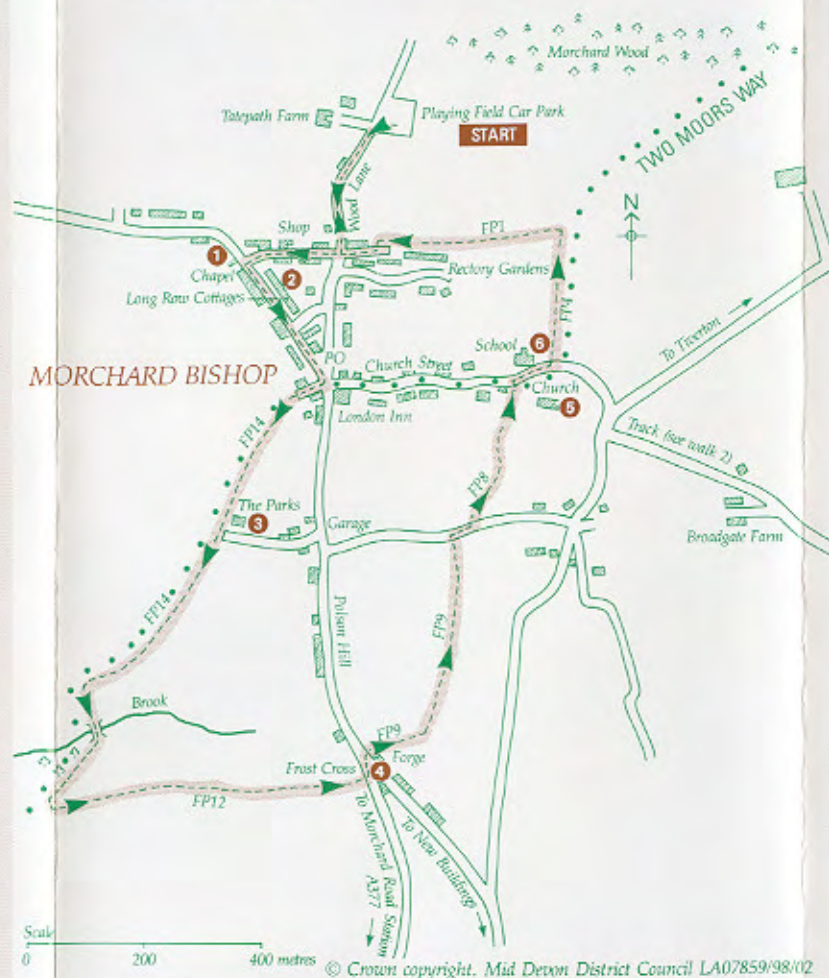
APPROXIMATE DISTANCE – 2¾ miles (4.5km)

APPROXIMATE TIME GUIDE – 1½ hours

STARTING POINT – Playing Field Car Park

TYPE OF WALK – Easy to moderate

MAP – WALK 1



Walk 1 is varied, passing through the village with its long row of 18th century cottages and fine 15th century church and then through pleasant fields and pastures with splendid views of Dartmoor.

The walk starts from the playing field car park lying north of the village. Turn left and south from the car park into Wood Lane. Proceed to junction of roads and turn to the right. Follow the road to a T-junction. The Methodist Chapel 1 is opposite. Turn left up the hill into Fore Street which takes one past the long attractive row of 18th century thatched cottages 2, the longest continuous row in Devon. Behind the cottages was once the village green. At the top of the village on the right, is the village cross sign-post with a track beside it. Follow the track and go through the gateway to the left (FP14).



Views of Dartmoor from The Two Moors Way.

You are now following part of the Two Moors Way for a short distance. Continue diagonally across, downwards slightly to the right. Go through the righthand gate and over the next three stiles, with the farmbuildings on the left. This is called The Parks 3 and considered to be where the Bishop had his deer park. The old Morchard races were also held somewhere nearby. After the third stile there are panoramic views of Dartmoor. Continue on down hill following the hedge on your

left through the gate. Turn left into a small track, and over the stile at the bottom. Bearing diagonally right, keep the two large oaks on your right. This leads to another stile. After the stile turn left and follow hedge round a lefthand corner and pick up FP12.

Travelling east, pass through or over a gate, keeping close to the hedge on left along edge of field to another gate. Pass through gate, with hedge now on the right. At this point there is a nice view of the church. Continue across field through rust-red stock-gates into the road. This is Frost Cross 4 and opposite is the forge whose owners have won many prizes for their wrought-iron work at Devon County Show. Turn left and then, almost immediately on your right, beside the forge's cob wall, is a sign. This is the start of FP9.

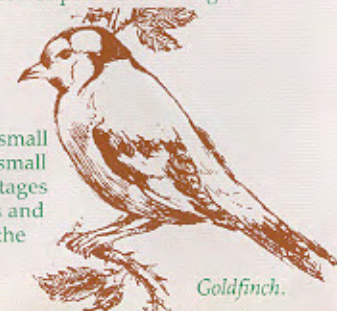
From the sign-post follow a small track with the cob wall on your right, and pass through a large gate then a small one. Ignore gateway on the left and follow hedge on the left to the stile near two large oaks. After the stile, walk diagonally up across the field to where a hedge corner juts into field, marked with a signpost. Having reached this corner (not clearly visible from stile) follow hedge on right to Broadgate Lane (FP8). To the right across the lane is a sign-post on a small raised bank where primroses, periwinkles and celandines flourish. FP8 continues along this bank, over the stile, diagonally right across the meadow with the church coming closer. Cross the footbridge into the sunken lane, where badger tracks can sometimes be seen. The lane, which can be wet at times, rises steeply up and down as one skirts the edge of the cemetery. Continue past a small hut on right with the 15th century church of St Mary 5 further to the right (this is worth a visit as it has a beautiful interior and there is also a seat outside with splendid views of Dartmoor). Go through the church gates opposite the attractive Victorian stone-built Primary Church School 6. Should you wish to stop for a light snack turn left after the church gates, follow Church Street to the T-junction, turn left and on the immediate left you will see the old coaching inn, the London Inn. Being on the old coach road from London-Exeter-Barnstaple, travellers must have been thankful to stop here. To return to the car park, turn right, cross the road and to the right of the school house there is a stile with a stone commemorating the opening of the Two Moors Way in 1976. Cross over the stile into the field (FP4).



The Forge at Frost Cross.

From here there are views of Morchard Wood. Follow hedge on left down to the bottom of the field. Turn left either through the gate or over the stile, joining FP1.

The path now turns towards the lower part of the village. Follow hedge on the left which passes the back of Old Rectory Gardens. (The Rectory was pulled down in the 1950's.) Tucked into the hedge on the left and just before a cottage is a small gate. Go through the gate into a small stony road, continue past old cottages on right, turn right at cross roads and continue back up Wood Lane to the car park and playing fields.



Goldfinch.

WALK 2

FOOTPATHS – (1, 4) 6, 7 and 33 on the parish board

OS MAP REFERENCE – OS Pathfinder Series SS 60/70 1:25000

APPROXIMATE DISTANCE – 2¾ miles (4.5km)

APPROXIMATE TIME GUIDE – 1½ hours

STARTING POINT – Playing Field Car Park or Church Street

TYPE OF WALK – Moderate, but very steep through woodland area

MAP – WALK 2



Walk 2 is again varied passing through hilly fields and woodland and then continuing by road or old track. There are views of Dartmoor and, in the far distance, Exmoor.

It is possible to park either in (A) the playing field car park to make a longer walk, or (B) Church Street near the entrance to the churchyard, except when the children leave school at 3.30pm (winter) and 3.45pm (summer).

(A) If proceeding from the car park turn left into Wood Lane as for Walk 1. At the crossroads turn left (signposted) into old track between cottages and Old Rectory Gardens. Go through a small gate on the left just past the last cottage. (FP1). Follow the right hedge to the first gate and stile and turn right up towards church. This is now FP4. Cross over the stile at the top of the field, turn right and cross over the road to the church gates.

(B) Proceed from this point if car is parked in Church Street.

FP6. Pass through the church gate and follow the tarmac path with **St Mary's 15th century church tower** ① on the left, continue past the church main entrance and to the right is a spectacular view of Dartmoor. The church stands at 600 feet and is visible for many miles around. A meteor struck a pinnacle during a storm in the 1950's. Continue through the little wrought-iron gate made by the owners of the forge at Frost Cross in the valley below. Carry on in a straight line passing a fine line of old trees and go through a small gate. Cross the road to the opposite field gate and signpost (FP7).

Go through the gate and follow the righthand hedgerow. In the lefthand valley below is seen the white **Barton House** ②, an early Victorian house built by the Lords

Portsmouth and which, reputedly, Winston Churchill visited. The woods further left beyond Lady's Plain are again Morchard Woods. Far distant on a clear day Exmoor can be seen. A stile will be found tucked in the hedge on the right. Cross over the stile (1st), turn left and still follow the straight line of same hedge, now on the left. The hedge and path start to drop down the hill towards a small wood called **Beardown Copse** ③. Cross over the stile (2nd) facing you, into the above wood. The path does a slight S-bend, swings left towards a wire fence and goes steeply down through the wood. The next stile (3rd) lies ahead (clearly visible in winter) on edge of the wood. Cross over the stile into the small grassy valley. The next stile (4th) is clearly seen in front of the second wood. Once into the wood, bear very slightly right climbing steeply and make for the far edge of the wood. When you reach the fence along the righthand edge of the wood, turn left uphill following the fence until you reach another stile (5th) at the top of the hill. Exit out of the woods and walk a few yards to the brow of the hill. Dartmoor is to the right with

Barton House and Morchard Wood to the left. Follow the crest of the hill and remains of the hedge and fence until a

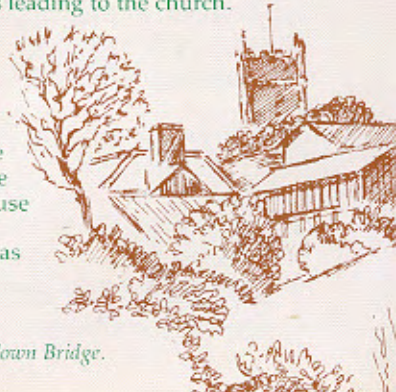


Bluebells abound in Beardown Copse during the late spring and early summer.

more substantial hedge appears. Do not turn left but follow this hedge keeping it on your left till a stile (6th) appears. Cross over stile and follow the hedge on the right towards the cottage. Cross the final stile and walk down the steps into the road opposite **Farthing Park** ④. Turn right and follow the road past a thatched house on the right and continue up a gradual hill. Just past a track to the left there is a signpost pointing across the field (FP33).

Enter the field and walk straight across towards the remains of an old cottage (**Chapman's Cottage**) ⑤ on the other side of the hedge. Cross the stile here and turn right into an old cart-track. Follow this cart-track, which gives one a marvellous idea of what the roads were like in a bygone age, and leads one back up towards the church. Pass over a little bridge called **Beardown Bridge** ⑥. Beardown Copse is to the right, and the track climbs past the side entrance of Broadgate Farm. At times the track is down to bed-rock. The track levels out at the top of the hill and on the other side of the tarmac road will be seen FP6 again with its line of trees leading to the church.

Retrace your steps past the church. Walkers who have left their cars in the playing field car park should turn right after the church gates and cross the stile beside the school house to pick up FP4, the Two Moors Way, and proceed as for last part of Walk 1.



St. Mary's Church from Beardown Bridge.

WALKING IN MID DEVON

Mid Devon is an unspoilt rural area, typified by rolling hills, wooded valleys and active rural villages. The District has over 900 public rights of way, covering in excess of 625 miles (1000km) of beautiful yet traditional countryside.

It is hoped that the Mid Devon Country Walks series will help visitors to discover and enjoy the natural beauty, history, wildlife, culture and character of this attractive part of Devon.

MID DEVON CONSERVATION AREAS

Many of the walks described in this series pass through Conservation Areas. These areas are designated to protect and enhance the special character of a settlement, by highlighting important groups of buildings and their settings which are of architectural or historical significance. Designation of a Conservation Area is not meant to fossilise the settlement – instead it should be seen as a positive step to highlight an area's qualities. For further information, please contact the District Planning Office at Mid Devon District Council.

OTHER LEAFLETS

Mid Devon District Council produces a wide range of visitor publications including Town Trails, Activity Leaflets, 'What's On' events listings, cycle routes and the Visitor Guide to Mid Devon. These may be obtained from local Information Centres/Points or from the District Council (see back cover for addresses).

USEFUL INFORMATION

- The walks described in this leaflet cover a variety of surfaces from water meadows to tarmac roads and walkers are advised to wear sturdy comfortable footwear.
- When walking along country lanes please take care and keep a close eye on children.
- Cameras and binoculars are always useful for appreciating and recording the beauty of the countryside and its wildlife.
- Always follow the 'Country Code' and please avoid straying into private properties described along the route.

AND, WHEREVER YOU GO, FOLLOW THE COUNTRY CODE

Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work

Guard against all risk of fire

Fasten all gates

Keep your dogs under close control

Keep to public paths across farmland

Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls

Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone

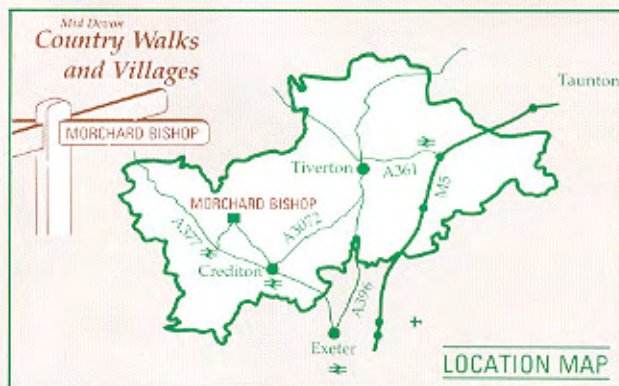
Take your litter home

Help to keep all water clean

Protect wildlife, plants and trees

Take special care on country roads

Make no unnecessary noise.



A more detailed Mid Devon Map is available from Tourist Information Centres/Points or from Mid Devon District Council

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Morchard Road Station, on the Exeter to Barnstaple 'Tarka Line' lies approximately 2 miles south west of Morchard Bishop. For train times please telephone 0345 484950.

There are also bus services from Crediton and Exeter – please telephone Red Bus on 01271 345444 and Turners Tours on 01769 580242.

VISITOR INFORMATION

TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES (For all tourist and accommodation enquiries)

Tiverton – Phoenix Lane, Tiverton EX16 6LU Tel: 01884 255827 (open Mon-Sat all year round)

Crediton – Market Street Car Park, Crediton Tel: 01363 772006

TOURIST INFORMATION POINTS – to pick up leaflets only

BAMPTON • CULLOMPTON • EGGESFORD
CLAYHIDON • COPPLESTONE • MORCHARD BISHOP

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL – Tourism Officer
1 Westexe South, Tiverton EX16 5DQ. Tel: 01884 255718

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY AND BRIDLEWAYS

The walks described in this leaflet were surveyed at the time of publication and should be clear, waymarked and walkable. The countryside, however, is a changing place so it may be that on certain occasions some changes from the text or map are found on the ground. The walks, nevertheless, should be passable and if you experience any difficulties please contact: Rights of Way Officer, Mid Devon District Council, Ailsa House, Tiverton EX16 4DZ. Tel: 01884 255255.

For those seeking additional information, the parish of Morchard Bishop is shown on the OS Pathfinder Series Map SS 60/70 1:25000.

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