

Country Walks and Villages

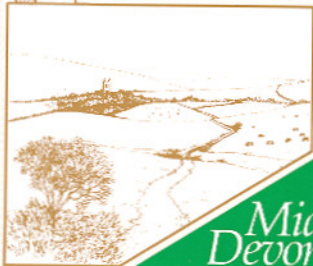
CHAWLEIGH

Walk One - via Box's Corner

A moderate walk of 1½ hours
through Chawleigh village centre and
across farmland.

Walk Two - via Southcott Cross

A moderate walk of 1½ hours across
rolling Mid Devon countryside.



Mid
Devon

VISITOR INFORMATION

The parish of Chawleigh

Chawleigh is approximately midway between Exeter and Barnstaple lying on the hills above the Taw Valley.

The first written records of Chawleigh appeared in the Domesday Book when mention was made of 'Calveleia', meaning 'calves' clearing'. This link between calves and cattle generally was retained over the centuries, with the twice yearly cattle fairs. This once important feature of village life has long since disappeared.

The economy of the village has always been dominated by farming. During the 15th century Chawleigh was one of many village boroughs in Devon - an indication of confidence and wealth. As well as farming, other businesses have existed in the village including dressmakers, a blacksmith, a shoemaker, a baker and, from the 1980s, a garage.

Times however were not always good, and in common with other towns and villages in England in the 18th and 19th centuries, villagers would pay a few pence a week into a friendly society, or death club, to insure against sickness or loss of earnings. Chawleigh's Friendly Society is still in existence today and the annual club day, traditionally celebrated with a parade of the brass band followed by lunch, is today celebrated by the Chawleigh Fair on the first Saturday in June.



Chawleigh School House

The Friendly Society may well have proved to have been extremely useful after a devastating fire struck Chawleigh on 25 August 1869. After starting in a piggery owned by Master Tancock, a carpenter, the fire quickly spread through the thatched cottages. Some 21 houses were destroyed leaving 80 people homeless.

As a result of the fire, a large number of the original buildings in the village were destroyed. The church, school and parish hall were fortunately untouched and today provide a very attractive centre to the village. It is thought that a school has existed in Chawleigh since the mid-17th century. It was common for early schools to be based in the church house with the parish clerk acting as teacher. The church house was usually a building near the church where, amongst other things, the church ale was brewed. The proceeds from the sale of the church ales were devoted to the upkeep of the church and for the benefit of the poor. The school has been housed in its

current building since 1806. The building had been previously used for the habitation of the poor, which probably explains its close proximity to the church and therefore the vicar, who would no doubt have overseen the building and its residents.

Today, Chawleigh is a busy community with village shops, garage and two pubs. Much of the centre of the village has been designated a Conservation Area by Mid Devon District Council.

The two walks included in this leaflet take you through some very beautiful countryside surrounding the village of Chawleigh, giving wonderful views across the Taw Valley towards Dartmoor and towards Exmoor.

WALK 1

OS MAP REFERENCE - OS Pathfinder Series
SS61/71 1:25000

APPROXIMATE DISTANCE - 2½ miles (4.5km)

APPROXIMATE TIME GUIDE - 1½ hours

STARTING POINT - Chawleigh Village Centre
(roadside parking is available)

TYPE OF WALK - Moderate (NB Paths can be very
muddy after wet weather)

Walk 1 uses a combination of quiet lanes and field paths with splendid views of rolling Mid Devon countryside and of Dartmoor National Park.

The walk starts from the centre of Chawleigh. Before commencing the walk you may wish to explore the centre of the village. The school, St James' Church and village hall make a very attractive scene at the heart of the village. Take the road turning with the Chilcott Arms Inn, formerly known as the Portsmouth Arms Inn, on the corner and follow the road round to the left to reach a cobbled area in front of the school and village hall.

St James' Church ① is worth visiting, with its unusual lychgate and fine roof screen dating, in parts, from the 15th century. The church was thoroughly restored in 1874 at a cost of over £1000. The restoration may well account for the modern appearance of the tower. The graveyard provides a



Chawleigh Church

delightful backdrop to the church, especially in the spring when all the daffodils and primroses are in flower. Opposite the church and school is the Jubilee Hall ②. This was

originally the Congregational Hall, but was bought by the parish council in the 1920s to serve as the village hall.

To start the walk, return to the main road and turn left to follow the road out of the village. Immediately on your left after turning is a short row of terraced houses. One of the houses, known as 'The Square' ③, was the site of an interesting discovery in the 1970s when, during the course of some renovation work, a hidden staircase was revealed. One theory is that following a devastating fire in 1869 the remains of two cottages were incorporated into one and, in so doing, the staircase of one of the cottages was blocked in. It is thought that the staircase could be 300 or 400 years old.

As you reach the edge of the village look for a signpost on your right - to the left of a house called 'Greenways'. Go through a gate and keeping close to the lefthand side walk straight ahead to reach a stile in the corner. Cross the stile and walk diagonally to your right to reach a gate in the corner. Go through the gate and again diagonally to your right cross another field to a gate.

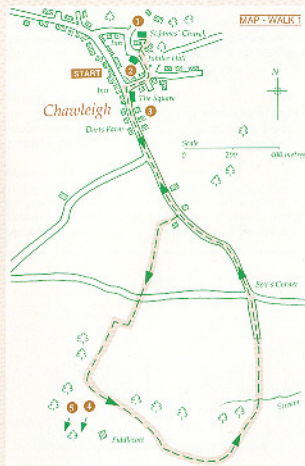
In the summer these fields are full of wild flowers - buttercups, clover and sorrell - and butterflies. Walk alongside the hedgerow on your right to the corner of the field to exit into a lane by way of a gate.



View of Cawsand Hill and High Willhayes

Cross this lane to join a track ahead. Follow this quiet track, pausing as it bends right to admire the spectacular views across the Mid Devon countryside to the hills and tors of Dartmoor. As with Walk 2 there are fine views of **Cosdon (Cawsand) Hill** ④ and **High Willhayes** ⑤ (621m/2038 ft.) the highest point on Dartmoor.

Continue down this track. At the bottom of the hill, leave the track to follow a path on your left. After crossing a small stream, walk up the hill. Keeping to the middle of the field, make for a gap in the hedge.



Cross the next field making for the top right-hand corner. Go through a gate and continue diagonally across the centre of the field. Go through another gate and turn immediately left, following the left-hand hedge. You may be able to catch sight of some red deer grazing in this area.

Go through the gate on your left and walk downhill to reach a stream.

After crossing the stream, climb over a stile and continue straight ahead looking out for a stile on your right. Cross the stile and continue up the hill keeping close to the hedge. At the top of the hill, go through the gate to join a track. Continue up the track which will eventually bring you out on to the Tiverton road. Turn left and continue along the main road back to the village centre and your starting point.



Red deer

WALK 2

OS MAP REFERENCE - OS Pathfinder Series
SS61/71 1:25000

APPROXIMATE DISTANCE - 2¼ miles (4.5km)

APPROXIMATE TIME GUIDE - 1½ hours

STARTING POINT - Chawleigh Village Centre
(roadside parking is available)

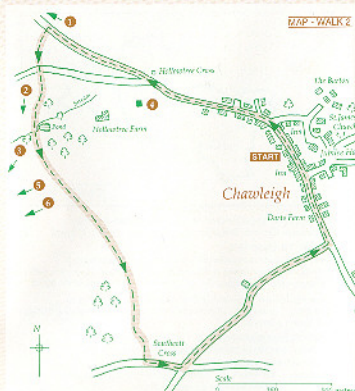
TYPE OF WALK - Moderate (NB Paths can be very muddy after wet weather)

Walk 2 follows a route along quiet country roads and across fields taking in outstanding views of the surrounding countryside, including the two National Parks of Dartmoor and Exmoor.

The walk starts in the village centre. Set off along the main street in a northerly direction towards Chulmleigh. At Hollowtree Cross take the righthand fork and walk along a country road for approximately 1/4 mile. The village of Chulmleigh ① can be seen directly ahead. Turn left on to a short track which will lead you into a field. Keeping to the righthand side walk along the edge of the field, through a gate and out on to a road. As you walk up this field, take



View of valley and stream running down to the River Taw



time to pause and look at the views of Exmoor behind you. In late summer the hills become a purple haze as the heather blooms.

Cross the road and go through a gate on the righthand side of a bungalow. Follow the left-hand edge of the field, keeping close to the hedgerow. In front of you there are fine views of the tors of Dartmoor. In particular, you will be able to see the smooth rounded shape of **Cosdon (Cawsand) Hill** ② and slightly to your right, the craggy outline of **High Willhayes** ③ (621m/2038 ft), the highest point on Dartmoor.

Follow the lefthand hedge downhill taking time to admire the lovely valley and stream as it runs down to join the River Taw. In April and May, the bright yellows of the gorse in bloom can be quite stunning. Behind you is a large house which for a while served as the village

rectory ④. It is now a private school. Follow the path through a gate and over a stile. Follow the path around the ponds which in the spring are surrounded by daffodils. You may be able to see buzzards flying above the valley.

There is then a steady climb uphill; keep to the right-hand hedge. As you climb you may be able to hear the trains running along the **Tarka Line** ⑤ between Exeter and Barnstaple. The Tarka Line follows the Taw Valley through Tarka Country made famous by Henry Williamson's story of Tarka the Otter. The Tarka Line may be joined at Eggesford, 2 miles from Chawleigh.

On the far side of the valley you should be able to see the ruins of **Eggesford House** ⑥. Eggesford House was built in 1854 by the Earl of Portsmouth. It was sold in 1914 and regrettably has fallen into disrepair and general decay. Today just the ruins remain of this once fine mansion. It is said that the Earl of Portsmouth insisted that when the railway was built across his lands he should reserve the right to stop any train at any time for the convenience of himself or his many guests. Honour was satisfied on both sides with the construction of Eggesford Station - for use by any passenger.

On reaching a gate, go through and walk across two fields, keeping in between the hedgerow and trees. An old Devon bank formed the edge of this small copse of trees. It was once much higher and stretched to the top of the hill. Many of the trees are oaks up to 200 years old. The hedgerows are full of wildflowers in spring and summer.



Peacock butterfly

Butterflies such as the peacock butterfly are also a common sight.

Go through the gate at the top of the hill and then straight ahead across the field to reach a road via a stile.

This is a quiet lane with good views of the rolling countryside typical of Mid Devon. Turn left. On reaching Southcott Cross, take the lefthand fork and continue along this road for about 1/2 mile. At the road junction turn left and follow the road back into the village to return to your starting point.

WALKING IN MID DEVON

Mid Devon is an unspoilt rural area, typified by rolling hills, secluded valleys and active rural villages. The District has over 90% public rights of way, covering in excess of 525 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' calendars, maps and an annual 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 narrow 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

There are bus services between Chawleigh and Chulmleigh/Barnstaple (Fridays only) and Crediton/Exeter (Tues, Thurs, Fri, Sat). For times please telephone Turnor Tours on Chulmleigh (0769) 80642.

There is a regular train service from Barnstaple and Exeter to Eggesford, 2 miles from Chawleigh. For times please telephone British Rail, Exeter (0392) 433551.

VISITOR INFORMATION

TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES (For all tourist and accommodation enquiries)

Tiverton - Phoenix Lane, Tiverton EX16 6LL. Tel: 0884 255927

(open Mon-Sat all year round)

Crediton - Market Street Car Park, Crediton Tel: 0363 772006

(seasonal opening only)

TOURIST INFORMATION POINTS (For tourism literature)

Bampton - Jasmine Tea Rooms, Brook Street

Cullompton - Bullring Restaurant, 20 High Street

Eggesford - Fox & Hounds Hotel

(all during normal opening hours)

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL - Tourism Assistant, Economic Development Unit, Market Chambers, Bampton Street, Tiverton EX16 6AA. Tel: 0884 234352

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 difficulties please contact Rights of Way Officer, Mid Devon District Council, Alsia House, Tiverton EX16 4JZ. Tel: 0884 255255

For those seeking additional information, the parish of Chawleigh is shown on the OS Pathfinder Series Maps 95 61 771.

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