

Walk No. 34 Valley to Beacon Sidbury and Fire Beacon Hill

The East Devon Way runs parallel to the coast and a few miles inland between Exmouth and Lyme Regis. Part of its route is something of a roller coaster, as it crosses a number of parallel valleys which run north - south to the sea, as well as the ridge lines in between.

This walk is based on the attractive village of Sidbury, in the valley of the River Sid. It climbs out of the valley, following the East Devon Way in a westerly direction to the ridge overlooking the valley, then follows the ridge to its southern end, the superb viewpoint of Fire Beacon Hill. From this vantage point the walk leaves the East Devon Way to return back into the Sid Valley and Sidbury, alongside the Iron Age hill fort of Sidbury Castle.

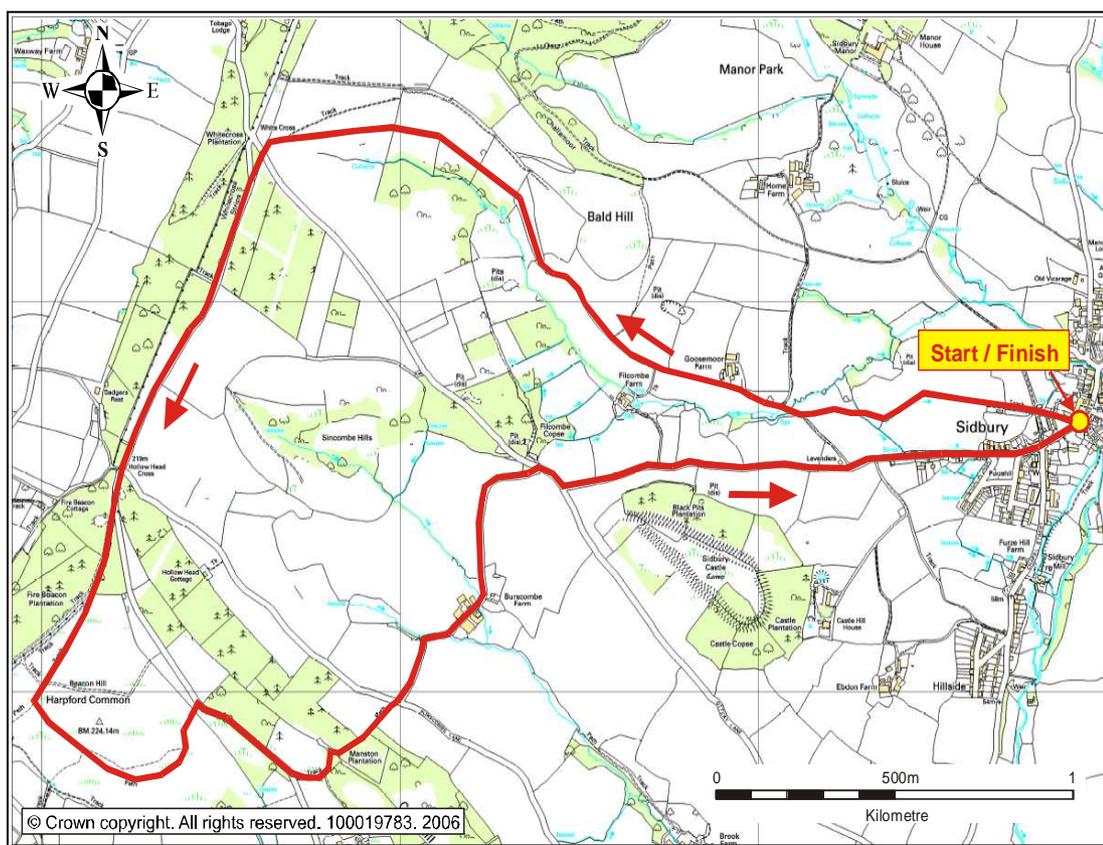
Fact File

Buses serve Sidbury on a regular basis, to and from Exeter and Sidmouth. For timetable details telephone Traveline on 0870 608 2 608 or visit the website www.traveline.org.uk

Walk length: 5 miles/8km; 6 stiles; a long steady climb of nearly 600ft/180m (although a substantial climb, because of its length it is never very steep).

Facilities: Sidbury; pub, shop/PO, buses, toilets, car park. White Cross, car park.

The Walk



Sidbury is an attractive village in the Sid Valley. It is of Saxon origin, probably being one of Devon's earlier settlements. Among its attractions is the church, which has elements of almost every period of English church building. This includes what appears to be a Saxon crypt, possibly the only example of Saxon work in a Devon church. The village was once an important centre, receiving a royal warrant to hold a market and fair from 1290.

Start in the centre of the village, outside the Red Lion Inn and the church. Walk in the direction of Sidmouth, past the Old Bakery. Take the footpath on the right, opposite the telephone box, which leads up a track, next to the Court House. This is signed as a public footpath to White Cross.

The Court House was originally Sidbury's Manor House until a new one was built outside the village in the 19th century. The front is 16th or 17th century in origin, although there are also later additions.

At the lodge (dated 1884 on the side), cross the entrance drive which leads to the later Manor House.

The Manor, visible in glimpses to the right, was built in 1879 for Sir Stephen Cave MP, a member of Disraeli's cabinet. The Cave family still lives there.

Pass the lodge and continue up the track ahead. Keep ahead through the left of the two gates.

The track is the route of the East Devon Way and on the gate is an East Devon Way waymark and a purple arrow, the mark of the Way and a good guide for the outward leg of the walk. The colour is based on the foxglove, the Way's logo.

The wooded hill ahead and to the left is Sidbury Castle, an Iron Age hill fort. Despite its name, there is no built castle. However, the hill fort gave its name to the village, the "bury" part of its name being the Saxon name for fortification.

Keep along the field edge to the stile at the end. Cross this and continue, hedge now to your left. Follow the hedge to a gate next to a stile and pass into a green lane. Turn right down the hill.

The first of many views up the Sid Valley can be obtained from here.

Cross the stream then continue up the track ahead, climbing now. At the farm (Goosemoor) go through the gates ahead onto the grassy green lane and continue climbing steadily but gently.

Parts of this lane can be muddy after rain.

Follow this lane, still climbing slowly, to its end where a gate leads to the corner of a field. Go ahead between the hedges, pass through a gap in the cross hedge and keep ahead across the next field, uphill. Aim for the right hand end of the pine trees. Cross the stile here on the left.

From here there are superb views back over Sidbury Castle to Sidmouth and the sea beyond.

After crossing the stile continue ahead following the East Devon Way arrows, hedge to the left. Keep on and cross another stile.

Down to the left is one of the characteristic features of this part of the East Devon landscape, a narrow gully or "goyle" as they are known locally. These goyles tend to be cut into the sides of the main valleys, and add variety to the landscape.

Keep ahead next to the hedge and then on across the field to a stile and gate leading to a track.

The walk has now reached the plateau top of the ridge separating the Sid Valley from the valley of the River Otter which runs parallel. The landscape here is quite different from that of the valley and valley sides. Up here the terrain is generally flat with large fields with straight hedges, compared with the steeper terrain and smaller, irregular fields lower down. This contrasting scenery is typical of the East Devon valleys and ridges.

Cross the stile and walk along the short track to the lane.

This is White Cross. Just to the right is a car park and from here there are wide views over the Otter towards Exeter.

Cross the surfaced lane to the track opposite through the woods. Keep on the track as it follows the ridge line ahead, firstly through woodland and then alongside fields. At a "crossroads" of tracks where the woodland re-starts, continue ahead and shortly afterwards fork right, still following the East Devon Way. This track soon emerges from the woodland to the open area of Fire Beacon Hill. Continue on the track straight ahead and keep on to the brow of the hill.

The walk leaves the East Devon Way here - that route continues ahead and downhill whereas this walk follows the main track to the left.

This is a superb location for views. To the right, or west, are views towards Exmouth and Budleigh Salterton, the sea clear behind Budleigh. Ahead is the prominent wooded dome of Bulverton Hill while farther to the left is Sidmouth with Salcombe Hill behind and the sea beyond both.

Keep to the main track as it contours round the hill until it reaches a slightly sunken track between banks where the woodland re-starts. Turn right here, going downhill.

This is an ancient trackway, leading from the old ridge route, probably prehistoric, to the old river crossing at Sidford.

The track descends quite steeply to arrive at the end of a surfaced lane. Turn left here, along the signed public footpath. Keep to the right hand side and the most obvious path passes along the bottom of a goyle. After a little way in the goyle look out for a footpath waymark post up on the right. Climb up to the post, crossing a bank, and then descend ahead steeply next to a hedge.

At a stile on the left, cross into the field and continue down alongside the hedge and on ahead to another stile and steps onto a lane.

The walk is now nearing Sidbury Castle and there are good views of this side of the hill fort and its earth ramparts from here. Sidbury is one of a series of Iron Age hill forts found on the East Devon ridges.

Take the lane opposite the stile, downhill towards the farm. Follow the lane down, through Burscombe Farm and up the other side to a junction. Turn right here and at the next junction bear round to the left.

The lane now descends back into the Sid Valley, alongside Sidbury Castle high up on the right. As the lane drops, Sidbury village comes into view and the walk passes a number of picturesque cob and thatch cottages. Most date back to the 17th and 18th centuries and one, Little Thatch on the right, is dated 1621 on the chimney.

On arriving at the main road at the bottom bear left to return to the village centre.

Further Information

A guide book on the East Devon Way is available in local shops and Tourist Information Centres, price £4.95. Alternatively, it may be obtained from Discover Devon Information Service, Westacott Road, Barnstaple EX32 8AW, telephone 0870 608 5531, price £6.45 including postage and packing; cheques payable to Devon County Council, quote reference DP17.

For information on the wider network of walking trails in Devon, obtain the free leaflet "Discover Devon - Walking" from Tourist Information Centres or from the address given above. Alternatively, visit the website www.discoverdevon.com which has all the walks information and an order form.

There are also a variety of leaflets and books on local walks, including some produced by the Sid Vale Association, all available from Sidmouth's Tourist Information Centre.

OS Maps for this walk :-

Landranger (1:50,000 scale) : no. 192 Exeter and Sidmouth

Explorer (1:25,000 scale) : no. 115 Exmouth and Sidmouth