

The Naps Lane Circuit.

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

Time: About 3 hours – 6.6 miles

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

Start from small car park in Newton Poppleford (Grid Ref 085898). Return to main street, go right downhill to 1st road to right (Millmoor Lane). Along here and look for Public Footpath in front of you, somewhat concealed between hedges! Stay on this footpath, passing through a small gate, climbing up and on the left edge of fields looking down on the River Otter to your left. Eventually, path drops, via small wooden gate and down steps and through some trees. Cross a small pasture area to a lane. Left down the lane to join path along this side of the River Otter. (NOT over the bridge !)

Recent storms have speeded up the ever-present erosion, with debris showing 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 into open pasture having passed a dubious looking open tank ! Carry on through the pasture close to the right hand hedge and move through the second gate on the right. Immediately, move left and then sharp right after some meters to go up a fabulous small earthy track, lined with wild flowers and ferns, to 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, walk right along the lane 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.

At 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, at the moment have set a clover crop as potential silage. There are some obvious paths off but stay straight on and emerge on a small road beside a cottage. Move right down the road and then sharply diagonally back right at Hawkerland Cross. 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 on 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 six 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.

Straight 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 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 (pigeonnier!). Move right, uphill, and pass Benchams Cottage and –behind high gates- Benchams. Here, move right on to the open heath and follow this path across wonderful open heath until you drop down to a small road meeting it at an acute corner. Travel left to crossroads where you go straight across into Back Lane. 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 so back down to your start.