

The Fluxton Lanes.

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

Time: About 2 hours. 4 miles

Grade: Moderate, mostly tracks and lanes. Wellingtons useful in Winter!

Take the Venn Ottery road, almost opposite the school, out of Tipton St John and after about 400 metres on a very sharp left-hand bend cross carefully and park up the lane in front of you. (Grid Ref 085918) Leave the car parked so as not to obstruct and walk up the gently ascending lane.

This lane is wide, scouring into the stony earth, with rich hedgerows and views back toward Ottery and the Sidmouth Gap. The track eventually meets a narrow surfaced road, and it's possible that it was itself part of the highway many years ago judging by the few remnants of tar macadam near its junction with the road. Move right up the hill, signposted to Aylesbeare, coming to a forest edge on your right. At this edge is a gateway into the forest, which is actually part of the Venn Ottery Common Nature Reserve. At the time of writing the common is being grazed by Exmoor and Dartmoor ponies and Galloway cattle as part of a heath management programme. Continue up the hill and near the brow of the hill, on the right, is a gateway and Right of Way sign leading on to the open heath. From this high vantage point you have wonderful views of the East Devon countryside. A small information board shows the paths and details the wildlife and area of the reserve. Follow the track in front and look out for the first signed track moving off and down to the right. Take this slowly descending path down into the wooded area. Soon you will follow a signed footpath left and down some old wooden steps, through a wooden gate and over a small footbridge over a stream. Here you pass a sad looking cottage, little bit of TLC needed, – thoughts of Hansel and Gretel – and then up a cinder track to a better-surfaced track.

Right along this one to the road. Move right down the road to a Y junction on a bend and here take the left lane –signed West Hill / Broad Oak. Stay on this woody lane for about 500 metres and then on the second right-hand bend turn right on to an unmetalled road. Quickly past the short stretch of houses and buildings and out into the wonderful open countryside. Potter along the track between fields and hedges BUT beware, in winter, the Puddles! Glad you have the wellies on but no problem in summer and even in winter there are edges to scramble along. You have almost 1.5 km of this marvellous track but then with great views of Fluxton look for the distinct fork right and head this way, passing a house on your left.

You will emerge eventually after more just magic track beside some cottages and farm buildings and here curve left down to the small road. Cross the road with care and straight up the bridleway footpath opposite, going straight up rather than left by the cottages. This is the final deep, tunnelled lane that emerges on the track from whence the adventure started! Move left down the track and back to the vehicle.