



**Charles and High Bray**

A fairly strenuous pastoral walk by the River Bray, following part of the long-distance Tarka Trail. The route back is along quiet country lanes and footpaths, pulling uphill to the tiny village of Charles

Essential Facts	
▪ Route distance:	17.6 km (11.0 miles)
▪ Approximate time:	4 hours 45 minutes
▪ Optional shorter route:	8.0 km (5.0 miles)
▪ Approx. total ascent:	390 metres (or 275 metres)
▪ Start point Grid Ref:	SS 690 309
▪ GPS Ref:	SS 69099 30910
▪ Recommended O.S. Map:	Explorer OL 9
▪ Toughness Rating	Somerset 3

Please see the notes on Toughness Ratings at the end of this report

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CHALLENGE ?**

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Full Info from the Great Walks web site

## THE ROUTE

The walk starts near the tiny hamlet of West Blakewell, off the A399 north of South Molton. The Figure of Eight nature of this route enables you to return to base and reduce the distance by half.

**Note:** There is a shallow river to be forded at **D**. After a prolonged period of extensive rainfall you may find the crossing too adventurous (in which case the first section of the walk will be very muddy too).

You should park in one of the lanes approaching Blakewell Bridge. But take care to tuck in well and don't obstruct the roadway or gates. From the bridge make your way a short distance uphill and take the 'Tarka Trail' signed footpath to your right at **S**. Follow the footpath along by the stream until you come to the little gate which leads out onto a track. Follow the way markers to the left up the track to the stile, and cross the field to come out between the cottages at the top. Turn right, behind the cottages to access the lane at **A**.

Here the shorter route turns left uphill; but the main route plunges down the lane to the left and crosses the main road at the bottom, to follow the lane opposite. Continue to the junction at **B**, where the Tarka Trail is marked through the gateway to your left (the track to the left of that is where you will come out later).

Follow this track to the forest, turning right (downhill) at **C**, and staying with it until you come to the stream to be forded at **D**. From here, follow the lane left until it joins the road down from Molland at **E**.

At **E** you turn left and walk about 300 metres to the footpath on your left. This takes you across the field and uphill by the farm buildings at Lower Hall, **F**.

Turn left onto the road here, and follow it to Bray Cross at **G**. Take a left turn here, and bearing left through High Bray, take the track off to the far left beyond the hamlet, **H**, emerging some 2 km later back at **B**.

Crossing the main road again, take the original lane steeply back uphill, pulling all the way up to the village of Charles at the top. Turn left just beyond the church at **I**, along the road marked 'West Buckland 4', but ignore the next left turn (unless you want a shortcut back to Blakewell, where you are parked) and follow the road downhill past the mill.

Pulling up the hill beyond, turn left at **J**, onto the footpath across a field at the very top, just before the lane curves to the right towards the farmhouse.

Follow the track to a gate, and then continue with the hedge to your right to the wood at the bottom of the hill. Cross the footbridge and turn left up into the woods. Follow the track through the woods, bearing left at **K**, as the signs suggest. Cross the field at the far end to come out onto the lane at Charles Bottom, **L**.

Here you turn left, and walk the kilometre or so back to the start near Blakewell Bridge, **S**.



**The Well Beaten Track**



**The Tarka Trail**



**The Swirling River Bray**

## Refreshment

The Stags Head Inn Public House Stags Head, near Castle Hill Tel: 01598 760250 Country pub with meals & snacks	Poltimore Arms Public House Yarde Down, Brayford, South Molton Tel: 01598 710381 Home-cooked meals
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**The Stags Head Inn**

## LOCAL INFO

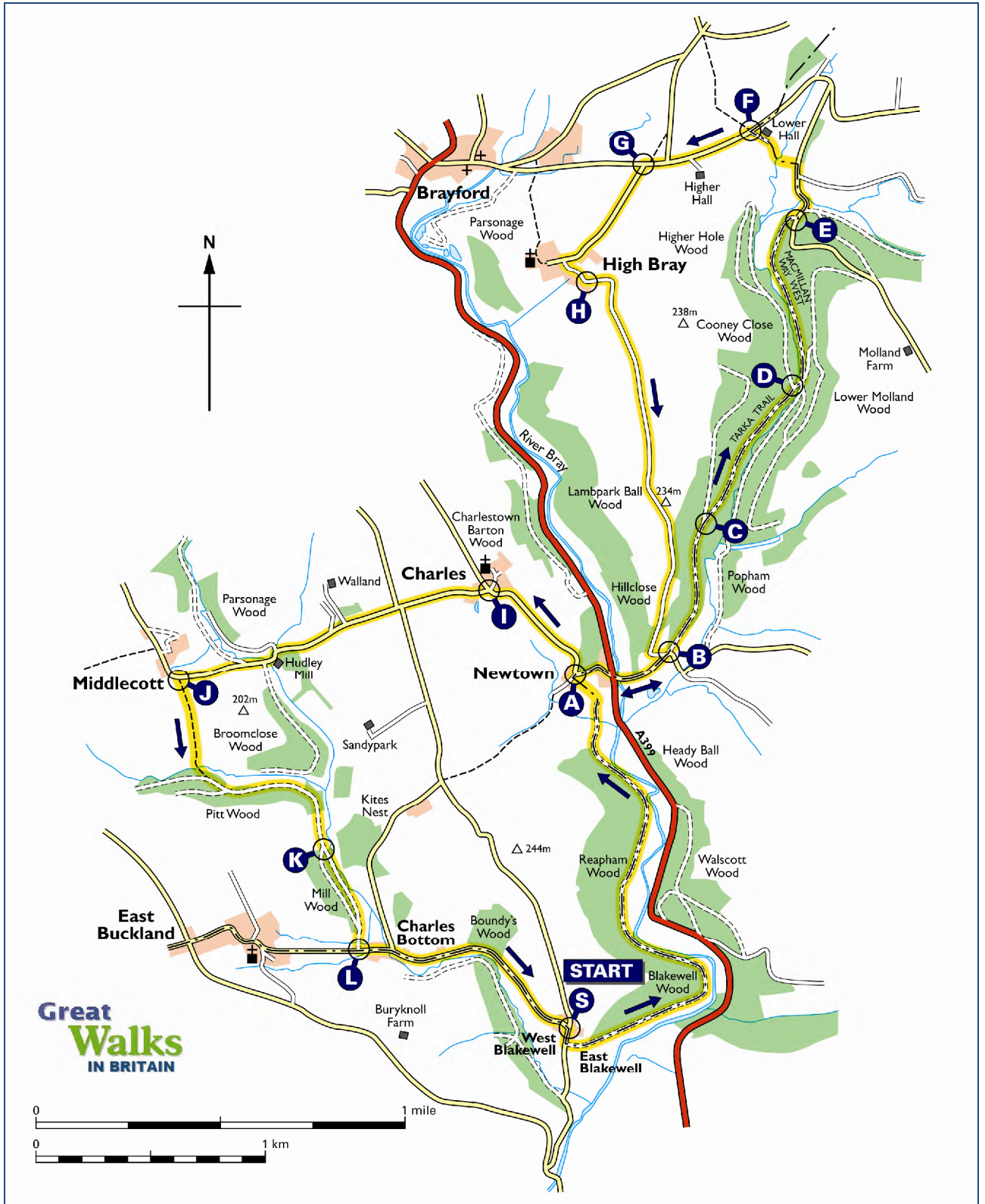
The fascinating building out on its own at the top of Hudley Mill Hill at Charles was, in the fifteenth century, a chapel dedicated to St Petrock. This sixth-century Celtic saint has many links throughout Devon and Cornwall and is the Patron Saint of Timberscombe, a place just off the main packhorse and drover's route which crossed Exmoor from Porlock to Barnstaple via nearby Brayford.

**St Petrock's chapel** was later converted to the rectory, and a regular visitor there was R. D. Blackmore, author of *Lorna Doone* (another connection with the Porlock area). Blackmore's uncle, Richard, was rector at Charles, and there is a window in the church there commemorating the author.

The parish of Brayford, which encompasses both High Bray and Charles, was a major iron-producing area for the Romans, 2000 years ago, and probably supplied markets throughout the whole Roman empire.

## CHARLES AND HIGH BRAY G.P.S. WAYPOINTS

WAYPOINT NAME	MAP REF	CO-ORDINATES	ELEVATION: Metres
CHS S	S SS	69099 30910	115
CHS A	A SS	69136 32478	121
CHS B	B SS	69550 32596	124
CHS C	C SS	69679 33104	181
CHS D	D SS	70111 33799	201
CHS E	E SS	70120 34482	160
CHS F	F SS	69876 34856	189
CHS G	G SS	69381 34668	190
CHS H	H SS	69075 34267	190
CHS I	I SS	68828 32796	202
CHS J	J SS	67370 32530	235
CHS K	K SS	68062 31758	156
CHS L	L SS	68261 31319	131



MAP LEGEND					
	Great Walks route		Church with tower		Spot height - metres
	M6 Motorway		Church with spire		Information centre
	A23 Main road		Other place of worship		Parking
	B2116 Secondary road		Cathedral / Abbey		Public convenience
	Minor road		Building		Public house
	Other road		Built up area		Picnic site
	Track		Woodland		Camp site
	Footpath		Sand, shingle or mud		Major tourist feature
	Bridleway		Water feature		Other tourist feature
	National trail				
	Railway				

## Safety First

**Safety should always** be your first priority in planning and undertaking a walk, whether on your own or leading a group. Please read these Safety First and Walking Our Routes notes.

**Lead a group** of other walkers only if you have leadership and navigational experience adequate for the 'worst case' conditions which may be encountered on the particular walk, bearing in mind the terrain, possible weather and navigational demands.

**Weigh up the capabilities** of your party, in terms of fitness and walking speed. Adjust your time expectations accordingly.

**Ensure** all your party are adequately clothed for the weather and conditions. Footwear is particularly important. Clothing must protect against cold, wet or strong sun according to the time of year.

**Emergencies** are quite rare, but it is essential to think ahead about what to do if someone in your party sustains an injury. Will you have a First Aid kit? Is there a qualified First Aider in the party? How could help be summoned in a serious eventuality?

**Refreshment**, particularly water, can be vital. Dehydration in hot summer conditions can be rapid, and frequent intake of fluids is essential.

**On tougher walks** it is a good idea to tell someone where you are planning to go – and when you expect to be back. Remember - mobile phones often lose reception in mountainous or isolated areas.

**All our walks use legitimate routes:** Public Rights of Way, Public Footpaths, Bridleways, Permissive Paths, Access Land, Byways and Roads.

**Road** walking calls for particular care. When there is no defined footpath or verge wide enough for safe walking it is usually best to walk on the right – facing oncoming traffic. An exception may be a tight bend, where walkers would be more visible on the left.

**Occasionally** you may find a public footpath blocked or unuseable. It is perfectly in order to take the shortest available diversion without damaging crops, perhaps around a field margin.

**It is courteous** to close gates after passing through, sometimes even if the gate was open when you arrived – particularly if it is obvious livestock may escape.

**Mutual respect** for farm animals is to be encouraged! Don't frighten or annoy them, but equally don't put your party members in danger or discomfort. You certainly wouldn't be the first walkers to go round the outside of a field of frisky bullocks.

**Dogs** should always be kept on a lead anywhere near farm animals, and under close supervision elsewhere in the countryside.

## Walking Our Routes

**Our walks** are designed to be negotiated using the route directions in conjunction with the map section provided. We suggest walkers also take the Ordnance Survey Explorer or Outdoor Leisure map recommended for each walk.

**On mountain, moorland and open heathland** walks it is **ESSENTIAL** to have navigational expertise and tools, including the recommended Ordnance Survey map(s).

**Take care** to observe any cautions in the route description; exposed paths, areas liable to flooding etc.

**Consider conditions before setting off.** Will heavy rain have made a water meadow impassable? Will frost or snow make a path slippery?

**When navigating the route** look for clues to confirm you are in the right place. Are map features where you would expect on the ground? Are features mentioned in the text where expected? If you suspect you may have taken a wrong turn, take action sooner rather than later. It is better to re-trace to a known point rather than carry on regardless with the possibility of becoming increasingly confused.

**All our routes are carefully checked** before publication, but features can change on the ground – sometimes surprisingly quickly. Footpaths may be re-routed, buildings can appear or change significantly and these days pub names seem to change frequently.

**The approximate time** given for each walk is based on an average walking speed of 2.5 miles per hour (4 km/hour), plus an allowance for ascent, descent and any difficult terrain.

**Total ascent** is the approximate total ascent over the whole walk.

**GPS users** can enter in the waypoints provided in each of our walk reports. It is important to read our guide **Introducing GPS for Walkers**, available as a PDF file from the Great Walks in Britain web site.

**Remember that GPS** is a great navigational tool, but only one of those available to the navigator. Never dispense with conventional map and compass – and the training and skills to use them, especially on mountain, moorland or open heathland walks.

### TOUGHNESS RATINGS

Most of our **Somerset & North Devon** routes can be undertaken by reasonably fit walkers able to utilise the map segments and our recommended Ordnance Survey maps, together with the route guidance notes.

The toughest walks should be undertaken or led only by experienced mountain walkers with navigational expertise. Always consider recent and forecast weather.

Each walk has been allocated a **Toughness Rating**:

1. Easier walks with modest ascent and generally on well defined paths. There may be stiles or narrow gateways to negotiate.
2. Routes which are more demanding. They may include more ascent and possibly paths which are looser or more difficult underfoot.
3. More strenuous walks. There may be prolonged steep ascents, and perhaps several ascents over the whole walk. Conditions may be challenging underfoot.
4. The toughest walks, requiring considerable fitness and navigational experience. There may be prolonged steep ascents. The ability to navigate by compass may be essential.

Toughness Ratings are allocated in the context of the terrain in the edition area. For example a walk rated as demanding in Cambridgeshire may be equivalent to an easier or moderate route in Somerset & North Devon.