

Pre-Historic Tarr Steps

Walk the way of our ancestors on this moderate route from Withypool, through the Barle Valley and crossing the river by way of Tarr Steps

Essential Facts

- Route distance: 14.0 km (8.8 miles)
- Approximate time: 3 hours 30 mins
- Optional extension: 0.8 km (0.5 miles)
- Approx. total ascent: 295 metres
- Start point Grid Ref: SS 844 354
- GPS Ref: SS 84456 35411
- Recommended O.S. Map: Explorer OL 9
- Toughness Rating: Somerset 3

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

Up For A
CHALLENGE ?

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A Donation
An Individual Walk
A Team Effort

Full Info from the Great Walks web site

THE ROUTE

The walk starts in the car park outside the village of Withypool, just beyond the cattle grid by the river, **S**. Walk back through the village, pas the pub and the church on your left, and follow the road steeply uphill to the footpath sign on your right at **A**.

Follow the footpath downhill and through the gate at the bottom into the meadow beyond. At the far end there is a further gate, from where the path wanders along the valley, never far from the river. At **B**, ignore the track away to your left and keep following the footpath by the river until you come to Tarr Steps.

Having taken time to view these pre-historic constructions, turn left up the road past Tarr Farm Inn. Go through the gate into the field above the inn at **C**. Aim for the far right-hand corner of the field at the very top, and go through the gate (note that this part of the footpath is not signed). Go directly across the next field to the gap in the hedge, and in the field beyond again walk slightly to the left of the track to the gateway opposite. Signs will now guide you straight down the boundary of the next field, and will then direct you along a diversion of the footpath, through two fields and up to Lower Knaplock, **D**, where you turn right up the lane.

At Higher Knaplock, shortly afterwards, turn left and follow the track up to the cattle grid at **E**. Keep with the track until it meets the road up from Tarr Steps at **F**. Here you will see a grassy track leading gently uphill to your left. Ignoring the track which splits off to the left about 100 metres beyond, follow the original track uphill until it meets another grassy track at **G**.

Turning right here, follow the track to a clearing with a few small trees. Follow the track which leads away between the two trees at the far side to the fingerpost to your left at **H**.

Do not take the bridleway downhill signed to Knaplock, but take the track to the right of it and follow this one downhill to **I**, where there is a gate to your left. Take the track leading uphill to your right, ignoring the path to your left a little way on, until you come to a meeting of four ways at **J**. Do not take the one to your right, leading uphill, or the one immediately to your left, leading downhill; instead take the other downhill option just beyond and follow it to the four-way fingerpost some distance beyond at **K**.

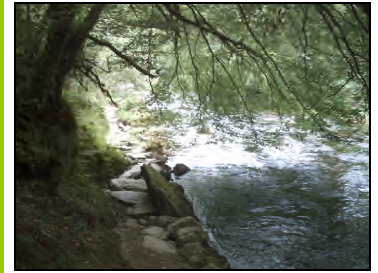
At **K**, the right-hand option, marked "Comer's Gate ½ ", is the one you want, but to find the track you need to backtrack towards the tree you've just passed, and you will then spot it snaking away just a little uphill, heading just a little west of north to Comer's Gate.

Follow this path to the end of the open access land at the cattle grid. At **L**, the road junction beyond the cattle grid, take the quiet road back down into Withypool and back to **S**.

(Note: There are a lot of paths and tracks criss-crossing this open access land. Although it should be easy enough to follow the above directions, the land is bordered to the left (downhill) by a hedge and to the right (uphill) by the road, both of which lead to Comer's Gate, so it should be well-nigh impossible to get lost!)

OPTIONAL EXTENSION TO THE CARATACUS STONE

At **F**, follow the road ahead of you to the junction at Spire Cross, and go straight across at the crossroads. At the first layby, about 100 metres beyond on your right, take the path between the three small posts and follow this to the Caratacus Stone. Return to **F** to continue the walk.



The Riverside Path



Exmoor Ponies at Large



Fording by Pony

Refreshment

The Tarr Farm Inn
Public house, Restaurant
and Tea Room
Liscombe
Tel: 01643 851507
Food served, real ales

The Royal Oak Inn
Public House
Withypool
Tel: 01643 831 506
Meals and bar snacks



The Royal Oak

LOCAL INFO

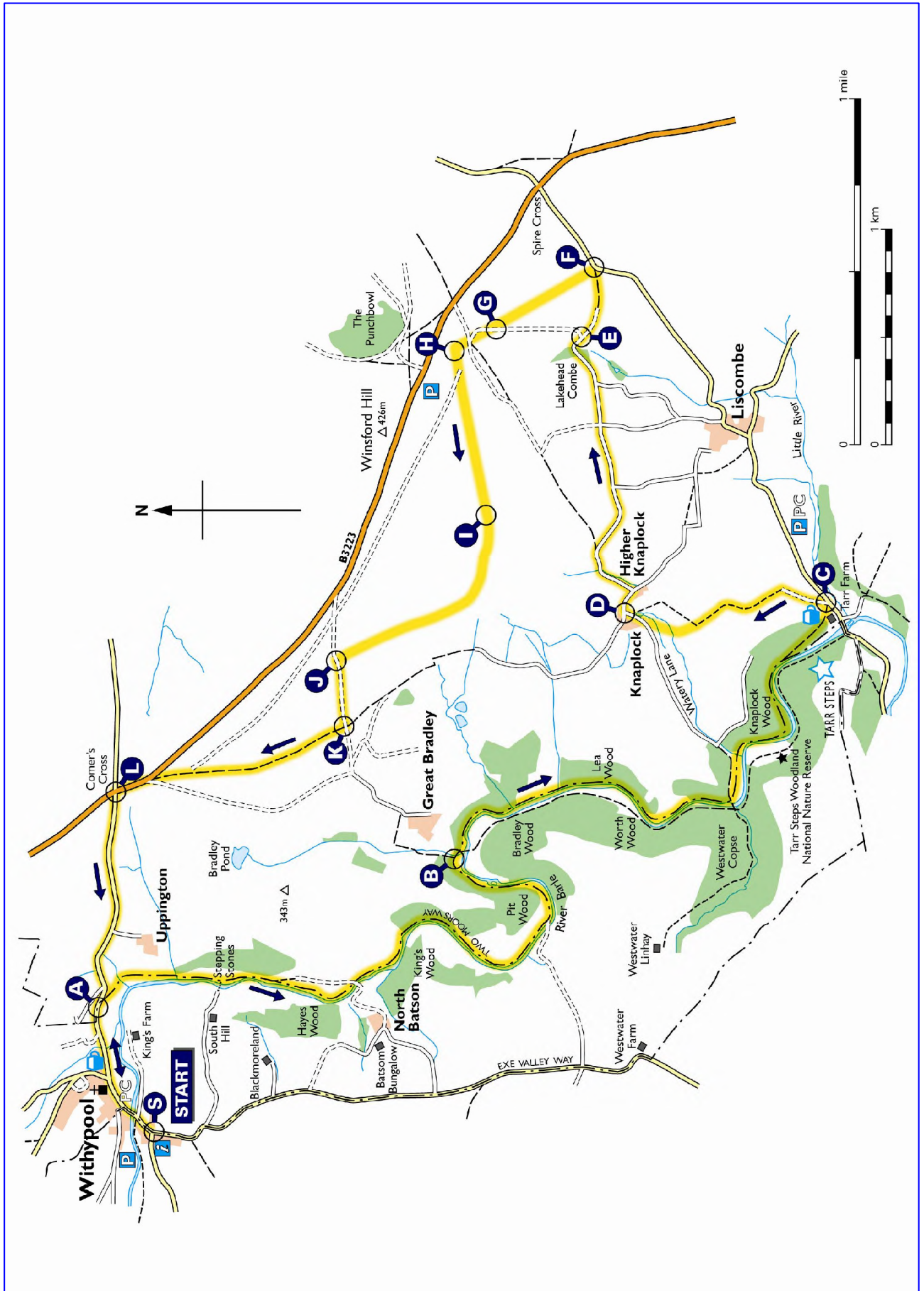
The pre-historic clapper bridge at Tarr Steps, made of 5-ton slabs of slate, is said to have been placed there by the devil for a bet! More rational explanations are hard to verify, as there is no real documented history. The slabs have been dated at around 1,000 BC and are shrouded in mystery thicker than an Exmoor fog.

The Caratacus Stone, up on Winsford Hill, commemorates Caractus, the British leader of the rebellion against the Romans in 47-51 AD. The stone was first documented in 1219 as a Forest boundary and called the "Langeston".

The trees in the Barle Valley are especially pretty in early spring or late autumn; and sometimes you can catch a glimpse of a kingfisher hovering over the river.

PRE-HISTORIC TARR STEPS G.P.S. WAYPOINTS

WAYPOINT NAME	MAP REF		CO-ORDINATES		ELEVATION: Metres
WPL S	S	SS	84456	35411	252
WPL A	A	SS	85035	35608	271
WPL B	B	SS	85716	33913	243
WPL C	C	SS	86868	32203	217
WP LD	D	SS	86823	33121	300
WPL E	E	SS	88097	33378	353
WPL F	F	SS	88462	33290	369
WPL G	G	SS	88169	33687	382
WPL H	H	SS	88101	33861	395
WPL I	I	SS	87172	33685	368
WPL J	J	SS	86634	34496	374
WPL K	K	SS	86324	34458	361
WPL L	L	SS	86007	35517	354



MAP LEGEND					
	Great Walks route		Church with tower		Spot height - metres
	Motorway		Church with spire		Information centre
	Main road		Other place of worship		Parking
	Secondary road		Cathedral / Abbey		Public convenience
	Minor road		Building		Public house
	Other road or track		Built up area		Picnic site
	Footpath		Woodland		Camp site
	Bridleway		Sand		Major tourist feature
	National trail		Water feature		Other tourist feature
	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 the Brecon Beacons.