



Walk No. 3 – Waddon and Kerswell

This is walk number three in a series of historical walks around Chudleigh and the surrounding countryside compiled by Alan Brunton for the Chudleigh History Group. Each walk commences from the Town Hall. The historical content of the walks is mainly brief, but further information can be found in The Chudleigh Book, available in the library.

Walk 3: Distance approx. 4 miles. Time 2–2.5 hours. Quiet roads, footpaths/bridleway

From the Town Hall, cross Old Exeter Street to New Exeter Street and turn left. Walk on the far pavement and when passing the entrance to Culver Park (Walk 2) notice the dipping point of the pot water supply in the wall of Culver House with its plaque. There are several of these in various locations around the town. The spring that fed this water supply rises near Oxencombe, several miles north in the parish, now cut off by the A38. When nearing the top of New Exeter Street turn right down the small lane towards the Sports Centre and Bowling Club. When writing this walk, plans had just been approved to build another 150 homes on fields above the Bowling Club, despite objections from our Town Council re putting too much pressure on existing services and limited access via the Old Kate Bridge.

Follow the road for half a mile to Brimley Corner, maintain direction to the right up the hill and then down to Waddon Thatch cottage. Ignore the right hand turning at the junction but look up and notice the very old mounting steps against the wall of Waddon Barton. These date back to the days of horse and cart travel and assisted riders to the saddle. It is the only example I know of in the parish.

As the road bears left the old barn here is the remains of Waddon Mill fed by a spring rising nearby. This stream used to run across the road just here and in 1950 Devon County Council wrote to our Council informing them of their intention to culvert the stream under the road. Our council objected to this proposal and the work was cancelled. Four years later our council changed its mind and asked Devon County Council to road over the water splash as it had “become a sea of mud during wet weather”. The work was duly completed. Note the little footbridge alongside the road.

Walk on past Waddon Spring and just past Ash Barn on the left are the remains of old Waddon, a tiny hamlet of a few cottages, seen better during the winter months when the foliage has shed some of its covering. By the order of the 6th Lord Clifford, its landlord at the time in the early eighteen hundreds, the properties were demolished because they had become “the haunt of vagrants and smugglers”, probably partly caused by the demise of local stone quarrying.

Having passed Waddon House and Waddon Lodge look for the footpath/bridleway to the right. After a few yards pass through a gate; the path runs between scrub



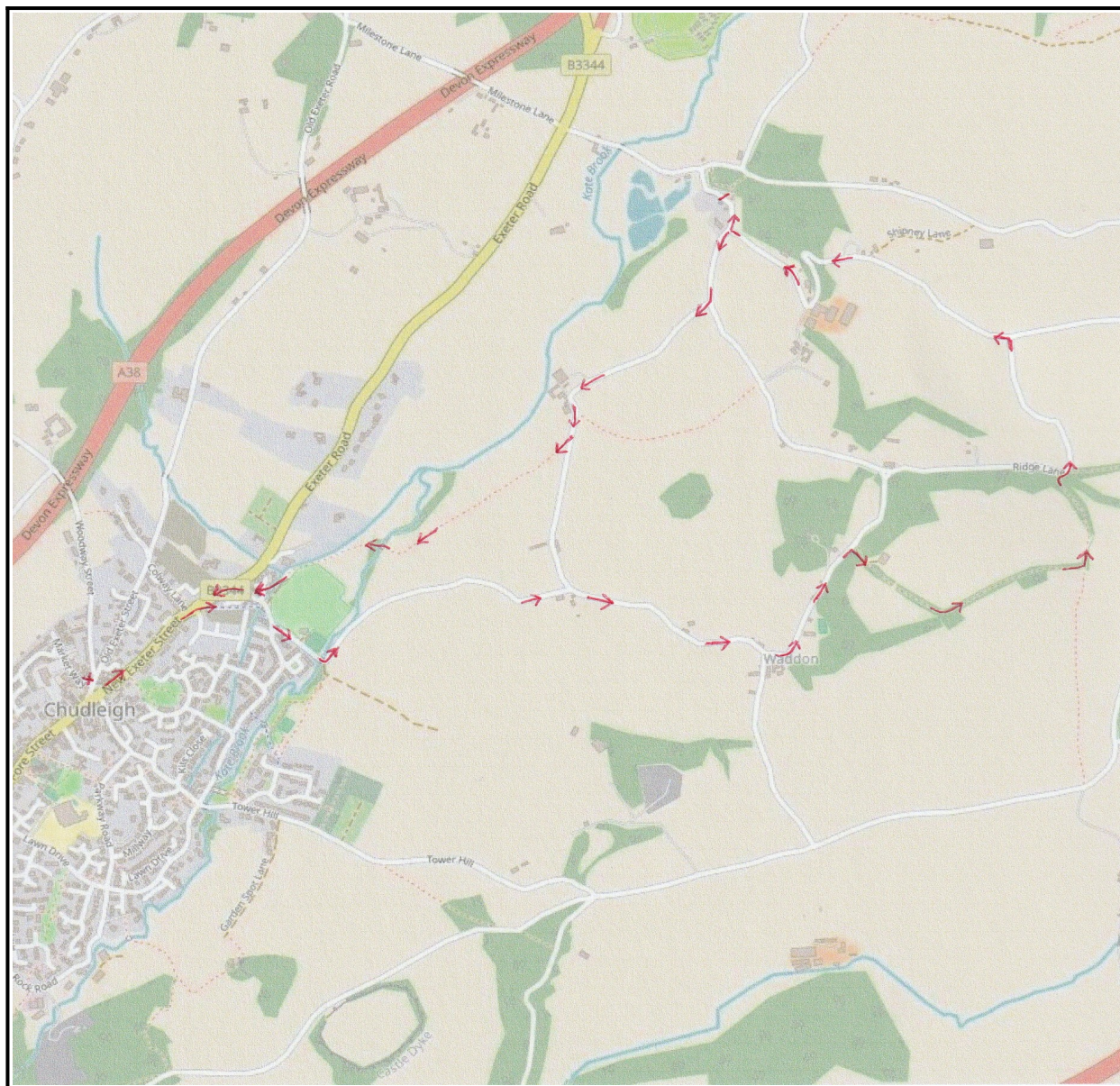
hedgerows with pastures either side. The underfoot conditions are rather stony so care is needed. Pass through the next gateway and after a further 200 yards another gateway. Hereabouts are the remains of some old farm machinery. When reaching the junction of bridleways turn left; pass through two more small gateways before a rough slope brings you to Ridge Lane and a hard road surface. Follow this lane to the right which twists and turns slightly uphill to another junction with stables on the corner. Turn left.

This quiet road takes you past the barn conversion of Higher Upcott, then the entrance to Stancott Farm, so named as for many years Stan Hill farmed here, and the arched entrance to The Willows. The road continues slightly downhill with the stone wall of Kerswell House to your right. Lovely views now open up of Chudleigh and Dartmoor far beyond. Kerswell House sits in an old quarry and has extensive gardens. The original house burned down seventy-odd years ago and the present is a rebuild. When reaching the junction turn right for a few yards; an interesting feature here is the now unused (and damaged) post box in the wall of the entrance to Kerswell House. It dates back to the reign of Queen Victoria and is marked VR – Victoria Regina. View the lime kilns which date back to the 17th century, and just up the footpath beside Kerswell Cottage are the remains of the lime burners' cottage, visible when the foliage has died away in the autumn and winter months. Behind the lime kilns and alongside the aforementioned gardens is another quarry basin which used to have a tennis court and pavilion. Very little evidence of these is now extant.

Now turn back, pass Kerswell Cross cottage and bear right at the junction with stables to your left. After half a mile you reach Hams Barton, probably one of the oldest properties in the parish still lived in. A chapter in *The Chudleigh Book* details its history over the years. The original mansion was considerably larger than what remains, built around 1400. During the Civil War of 1642, Hams Barton supported the Royalists. Four years later it hosted the Parliamentary Commander holding a Council of War discussing the siege of Exeter. Chudleigh itself remained neutral, which is thought to be the inspiration for our (unofficial, 1897) motto: *Discretus In Tempore Nostro* (Discrete In Our Time).

Just past Hams Barton take the public footpath on the right that leads across fields to the Sports Centre. In a few places this path reveals a stone base as for so many years this has been the pedestrian way between Chudleigh and Hams Barton.

Before the Sports Centre, a small wooden footbridge takes you over the Kate Brook. From the council minutes of 1952 a Mr T.H. Causley repaired this wooden bridge at a cost of £1.15s.6d. (£1.77.5p). Soon you will see the leat – which used to feed Chudleigh Town Mills – running behind the houses of Chapel Court before flowing under the Millstream Meadow road. When reaching the road bear right up the lane passing the Leighs housing estate on your left, built a few years ago. Return down New Exeter Street back to the Town Hall.



Route of Walk No.4 (map source: OpenStreetMap)