



Walk No. 4 – Chudleigh Woods & Oldway

This is walk number four 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 The historical content of the walks is mainly brief, but further information can be found in The Chudleigh Book, available in the library.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 4: Distance approx. 2.5 miles. Time 1.5 hours. Moderate walking, roads and footpaths

From the Town Hall turn left then bear left into Woodway Street. Immediately pass the 'front' door to the Woodway Room which accommodated, from the early 18th century until 1990, Presbyterian, Congregational and United Reform Church worshippers. In 1993 proposals were forwarded by our then Parish Council to purchase the redundant building and convert it to become part of the town hall complex. At an overall cost of £100,000 the purchase and restoration work was undertaken and a few years later the Woodway Room became part of Chudleigh Town Hall.

Woodway Street used to be a row of very rundown cottages which housed mainly labourers and their families working in the local quarries and mines in the Teign Valley. Soon after the Second World War these were demolished and the existing houses built. An entry in the council minutes of 1949 mentions soil being taken from house building in Oldway to Woodway Street "to promote better garden areas". Nearing the top of Woodway there used to be a slaughterhouse on the left and the large building an indoor riding school.

Having crossed over the A38 overbridge, ignore the turning into Parrs Lane and pass Rivendell Court and Croft Barn on the way to the corner where a T-junction sign and cattle sheds stand alongside. Bear left here on what at first is a hard surface to Chudleigh Woods Farm and then becomes a grassy track. Ignore the footpath to the right for another day and pass stabling on your left. The track becomes very rough in places and care underfoot is needed. It twists and turns with high banking on either side until you locate a footpath sign on your left. Take this fairly well worn path and soon you will see the River Teign below. Shortly you will be walking alongside it. The walk through Puttshills Woods is well over half a mile until reaching the exit, a tunnel under the A38.

In 1877 the Teign Valley railway line linking Exeter to Heathfield with stations at Dunsford, Ashton and Trusham was opened. Chudleigh station opened in 1882. The line ran mostly alongside the River Teign from Dunsford to Chudleigh Knighton, crossing it in places. It was very close to the Puttshills as it neared Chudleigh. Chudleigh station was between the current exit slip road up from the A38 northbound and the river and was



prone to flooding. The introduction of a bus service from Exeter to Newton Abbot via Chudleigh heralded the decline of the line as early as 1920. The rail passenger service closed in 1958 and the goods service in 1962, before the infamous Beeching cuts elsewhere.

From the tunnel walk up the steep hill, passing a South West Water depot on the way, and meet the road, *Old Way*, running up to town passing houses *Teignfields*, *Twindlebeer* and housing estates. Towards the top of Oldway on the right was the old gas works (now Skeigh Engineering). The remains of the old gasometer can still be seen to the rear of this property and the large house on the opposite side of the road was the manager's residence.

When reaching Fore Street, *Western House* stands on the left corner. After the fire of 1807, the licence of the destroyed Clifford Arms, held by landlord John Weston, moved to what is now Western House for a while until returning to the town centre. On the opposite corner stood Brockley House, demolished in the 1970s to accommodate road widening for the old gas works. Turn left into Fore Street.

Opposite the church you pass the *Bishop Lacy*, until 1961 The Plymouth Inn. Note the wide alleyways (locally *otways*), passages to the rear of several properties, that allowed coaches, horses and carts to pass through and under. In places the limestone flagstones show wheel tracks worn into the stone by cartwheels. The large stones either side of the entrance were to keep the cartwheel hubs from fouling the walls as they turned in, pushing them towards the centre. Along to the right is the *Phoenix* 'gastropub', previously the Coach & Horses public house and hotel until partially gutted by fire in 2011; this was the site of the Clifford Arms mentioned above.

Just a few yards now to the town centre, still sometimes referred to as Conduit Square, a pot water supply point in the stone structure known as the obelisk and a pump known to have been here in the 1500s. The War Memorial was erected in 1926.



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