



Walk No. 6 – Circular to Gappah Ridge

*This is walk number six 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 The historical content of the walks is mainly brief, but further information can be found on our website and in *The Chudleigh Book*, available in the library.*

Walk 6: Distance approx. 4 miles. Time 2–2.5 hours. Roads and footpaths

Cross the road and walk the length of Clifford Street, passing the Old Chapel, a (bricked up) dipping point, the alleyway to Glebelands, Kits Close and the mill, all of which I have detailed in earlier walk numbers. When reaching the crossroads turn left, cross the road and take the footbridge over the Kate Brook to avoid the road bridge traffic. This was opened in 2004 as part of the Millstream development and the bridge displays on its south side the shields/coat of arms of Troarn (France), and Chudleigh, the twinning having been conducted in 1982.

Rejoin the Mount Pleasant road – noting the C stone in the wall behind the two water main signs (see Walk 1) – with the Mount Pleasant View row of houses which were one of the first Council housing in Chudleigh, built 1926–28.

Further up the hill pass the cemetery entrance and the allotments. Take care now as no pavement exists and although the road is quite narrow traffic can be fairly heavy at times. When reaching Hillside Barn a footpath leads off to the right. Take this path – it is rugged in places and gets very wet in winter months. This path gets steeper as you near the top and takes you on to the road to Gappah to the right and crossroads left. This road is known locally as Gappah Ridge. Turn left for a few yards and take the short footpath to the road coming up from Ugbrooke. Laying in the valley below is Biddlecombe.

In our archives the History Group has a picture of Biddlecombe c1910 which was obviously built a few hundred years earlier. Several years ago I did some research on Teresa Helena Higginson, 1844–1905. Her mother, a deeply religious woman, had a profound impression on Teresa who, aged ten, was sent to a convent school in Liverpool where she stayed for eleven years. In 1900 she and a friend went to Italy and had an audience with Pope Leo XIII. In 1904 she came to Biddlecombe having gained the position of school teacher to the estate workers' children of Ugbrooke. She became much loved, always insisting in the 'Presence of God'. Following a stroke she passed away in February 1905 and at her funeral in Cheshire, Canon Snow said he had the firm conviction that Teresa Higginson was one of the greatest saints God had ever raised in His Church.

Retrace your steps to the ridge road and turn left. Very soon the large embankment of Castle Dyke is to your left over the hedge. Iron Age, and Bronze before, this hillfort measures 200 by 300 yards with exits/entrances either end. Although there is no real evidence of Roman occupation, its very position in relation to other Roman sites



nearby suggests a possibility. The Chudleigh Book has a fairly comprehensive chapter on the hillfort.

You now have about a mile to walk along this quiet road with excellent views of Chudleigh laid out below. Ignore the footpath coming up on your right and also another unsigned path, and continue to follow the stone wall, noting the huge oak and beech trees in and out of the park. Some must have been saplings planted over 400 years ago. Through the trees to the right you may glimpse what the Ordnance Survey maps describe as riding parks. The stone wall finishes just before passing Winstow Cottages below. Beneath here is a tunnel that leads into Ugbrooke Park. When our parish 'Beats the Bounds' once every seven years we leave Ugbrooke via this tunnel. There are two boundary stones in the park. Many years ago in the days of horse-drawn carriages this may have been an entrance to the park and the house. It would have been an impressionable drive through woodland and pastures.

The present Lord Clifford is the fourteenth to hold the title, the first being 1630–1673. Their names appear over the centuries at the head of various town committees. The family is one of the oldest and most interesting. Lord Clifford continues the family's commitment in providing local people with the beautiful Saint Cyprians Chapel at Ugbrooke for Catholic worship.

After passing above the cottages, walk on and take the first right hand turning down Shepherds Hill. When this road bears slightly left walk straight on along a grassy track with Winstow Cottages up to your right. The last boundary stone can be seen from here to your left alongside a telegraph pole some 200 yards distant from the road. At this point wonderful views of Dartmoor are gained. Since walking down Shepherds Hill you have been in Kingsteignton parish, but now back into Chudleigh's.

A gateway down this track leads to the aforementioned Riding Parks with Lawell House to your left and Chudleigh Rock to your right. This is all part of the Clifford Estate and in the past the house has been occupied by members of the family. In 1942 the then Lord Clifford asked our council to repair the little bridge over the Kate Brook alongside Lawell. It was duly repaired and our council then asked him to contribute to the cost as it was used by his labourers and their carts. A letter from the Clifford Estate was read at the next council meeting in which it said they "did not feel responsible for any of the repair work done to Lawell Bridge and therefore could not see their way to contribute towards the cost".

A resident at Lawell, who became a parish councillor during the 1930s, was Howard Gilbert Nalder. He died at the young age of fifty-one in 1938 but as a very wealthy man in 1904 was commissioned into the Army Motor Reserve. When the First World War commenced he was serving in the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve. Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty ordered the formation of an additional wing of an armoured car squadron. Nalder offered his car, either a Rolls Royce or Lanchester to be converted. However, the trench warfare in France resulted in those cars being withdrawn. We have no record of Nalder's war service from 1916 onwards.

From the little bridge the path passes through a gate to the left and then to an exit gate on Station Hill. From where you leave this footpath a little further down is Heightly Corner and 200 yards from here are the remains of Bridge Mill, now named Lower Heightly Farmhouse, before the confluence of the Kate Brook and River Teign. A few yards away is the driveway to Lawell House and the entrance to the Xpressway Business Park managed by the Clifford Estate. Thirty yards from the park entrance up



the hill and on the left is another C stone, the details of which are explained in walk number one and in *The Chudleigh Book*, page 313. If you wish to divert to see any of the above it probably adds another half an hour and another half a mile in distance to the walk.

Opposite the turning to Heightly is the entrance to a small housing estate named *The Rocklands*. This is so named after a large house and garden area, now demolished, where a school for boys with emotional and behavioural problems stood from 1958–1989. The estate was built during the 1990s. Then comes the recently built housing estate with road names recalling the town's woollen industry.

On the way back to the town on the right is *Rock House* which used to front a nursery with extensive gardens in a quarry basin behind the house and below the *Chudleigh Rock*. I have taken several walking groups around this area, including down the cavern where stalactites and stalagmites are forming from the continuous water dripping, as well as looking down to an underground watercourse flowing through. The nursery was purchased by *Kenneth Boulton* just after the Second World War. His son, *Bruce*, continued to run it until fairly recently since when the site was sold. During the war the house and gardens provided accommodation for American troops preparing for D-Day, June 1944, as did much of southern England. The house suffered much internal damage during this occupation. Several of our older residents have told me about the antics the locals and troops got up to during this period.

You then pass *The Old Pound* cottage; the old police station – now called *Hill Top View* – on the corner of *Rock Road*; the *Old Smithy* opposite; the *Vicarage*; *Old Fairfield*; *Western House*; *Old House* and opposite the parish church of *St Martin and St Mary*, is the *Bishop Lacy*, all mentioned in other walks. I have often been asked about a tunnel between the church and the pub. The *Bishop Lacy*, *Plymouth Inn* until 1961, was a simple ale house when the church was built, but no evidence of a tunnel has ever been found. Mention must also be made of *Alpha House*, by the zebra crossing, used as a hospital during the First World War. We are now back to the *Town Hall*.



Route of Walk No.6 (map source: OpenStreetMap)